

The Nation

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URBAN AMERICA SEES ITS FUTURE

In Los Angeles, Burning All Illusions

MIKE DAVIS

'The armored personnel carrier squats on the corner...' (Page 743)

EDITORIAL

HIGH HYPOCRISY

As soon as he returned to Washington from his visit to Los Angeles and the results of his urban policy (or lack thereof), George Bush showed how committed to change he is by vetoing the campaign finance reform bill. The legislation would have partially cleaned up politics by providing federal subsidies to Congressional candidates who agree to spending limits and by curtailing the flow of large donations to campaigns.

Bush assailed the legislation as an incumbent-protection plan. That ranks with his grossest dissemblings. He claims the bill is antidemocratic because it won't allow challengers to outspend better-known incumbents. But cases of challeng-

ers raising more money than incumbents are as rare as presidential candor. The bill would have given newcomers a real crack at those in power. Of greater concern to the White House was the prospect that the act would diminish the role of fat cats, many of whom have been seen most recently at controversial G.O.P. fundraising soirees.

Bush also griped that the bill amounted to a raid on the Treasury. He should talk. He has collected about \$150 million in federal funds for his presidential and vice presidential campaigns, making him the all-time leader.

En route to the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in South Central L.A., Bush's motorcade passed a protester with a sign that said, GO HOME YOU HYPOCRITICAL LIAR. It's unfortunate that when Bush applies for his next subsidy, the Federal Elections Commission can't say the same thing.

SURREAL CITY

JEN NESSEL

EL SALVADOR

SUSANNE JONAS

STREET KIDS

DAVID LEVI STRAUSS

PRICE'S NEOREALISM

GERALD HOWARD

CUBAN JAZZ

GENE SANTORO



LETTERS.

BUDGET BUSTERS

Washington

We share Robert Borosage's disgust with the total inability of the Bush Administration and Congress to reorient the nation's budgetary priorities in the wake of the end of the cold war ["Mugged Again," May 11]. We were surprised, though, that he chose not to mention that the Congressional Black Caucus (C.B.C.), this year in coalition with the House Progressive Caucus (H.P.C.), offered an alternative "Budget for New World Realities and for Rebuilding America."

Debated for eight hours on the House floor, the alternative budget detailed precisely the kinds of changes sought by Borosage and by tens of millions of Americans who believe the government no longer supports their interests. It went far beyond the military reductions proposed in both the Bush Administration and the House Budget Committee budgets. In fiscal year 1993 alone we could have saved \$50.8 billion in budget authority and more than \$28 billion in outlays from military-related reductions, laying the groundwork for a total reduction of 50 percent in defense spending over the next four years. In fact, projecting to the year 2000 it is possible to save upward of \$1 trillion—a staggering sum of money that could be invested in our equally staggering social and economic needs in health care, housing, education, transportation, agriculture and the conversion of our economy from a military to a civilian footing.

But regrettably, the House did not pass this budget, although it received more support than did the President's budget. For the moment, Congress has squandered the historic opportunity to alter fundamentally the spending priorities of the nation, depriving the people of any peace dividend this year.

It would be easy to conclude from its defeat that the C.B.C.-H.P.C. budget was an exercise in futility. But we believe progressives must continue to advocate radical changes in national priorities on all levels, including the halls of Congress, where scandal and petty intrigue get the headlines while far greater injustices go largely unreported. We applaud the farsighted commitment of national peace and justice groups to begin working with us now to develop a strategy to present such a budget next year. And we hope that *The Nation* and other progressive publications will report on our work so that this effort does not continue to take place in the dark.

Ron Dellums

Bernie Sanders
Members of Congress

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

New York City

To clear up a misunderstanding that was in Lawrence Cohn's *Variety* piece that Stuart Klawans cited in his review of the *Made in U.S.A.* series [March 30]: The debate over my series did not result in special Congressional

hearings; it was during the 1991 triannual reauthorization hearings for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that Congress took note of the dearth of public television programming addressing the lives and concerns of American workers.

Both the House and the Senate suggested in their reports that public television needs to pay more attention to this area. Unfortunately the report lacks the force of law. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has called for Congressional hearings, which might result in legislation if public television's programming balance is not improved soon.

Also, some readers may have gotten the impression that my next film, *Lost Eden*, was commercially financed. In fact, not only *The Killing Floor* but also *Lost Eden* and Barbara Kopple's *American Dream* have had grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. If conservatives succeed in closing down federal funding of the arts, film and broadcasting, we will see even fewer films about working people than the very few we see today.

Elsa Rassbach

UNION BLUES

Chevy Chase, Md.

Stuart Klawans's assumption, in his review of *American Dream*, that there had been no "concerted, nationwide organization" before the time of the Hormel Austin strike is inaccurate. Regrettably, the film obscures some C.I.O. packinghouse union history: The union replaced A.F.L.-style separate plant-by-plant negotiations with the system of companywide "chains" linking plant locals in commitment to a common agenda and producing a national contract with the same wages and benefits for all. It was the Austin local president's abandonment of the chain that packinghouse union leader Lewie Anderson refused to endorse. When the abandonment strategy failed, the two men who were its champions blamed Anderson rather than admit their own misjudgment.

I am the widow of Jesse Prosten, a founding organizer of the C.I.O. Packinghouse Workers Union, and have been a close observer of their struggles for more than half a century. For the sake of the cause to which my husband devoted his life, I must challenge the false portrayal of Lewie Anderson.

Already a veteran packinghouse worker in his early 20s when Jesse Prosten met him, Anderson was a strike leader in the Dakota City plant of the Iowa Beef Processors in the late 1960s. As United Food and Commercial Workers packinghouse division director after Prosten's retirement, Anderson continued to lead strikes—before, during and after the Austin action. The film informs viewers in a postscript that he was fired by the all-powerful U.F.C.W. president "because of his opposition to contract concessions." But it fails to point out that in Anderson's conflict with both the leaders of the Austin strike and the U.F.C.W. leadership, it was his insistence

on chain solidarity that was at issue.

Anderson has refused to resign quietly from the position of U.F.C.W. vice president to which he was elected unanimously only six months before his dismissal from the paid job of division director. He heads the reform movement that packinghouse workers launched after he was fired. REAP (Research, Education, Advocacy and People) campaigns for direct rank-and-file election, by referendum, of U.F.C.W. officers and directors, and for restoration of the policy of national contracts through chain negotiations. REAP held its second national convention in Wisconsin May 2 to 3; its program extends beyond the packinghouse membership to retail workers and other categories of U.F.C.W. members who want democratic change.

In the three years since they forced Anderson out, the "business union" U.F.C.W. leaders have approved packinghouse contracts with poverty-level wages and sharply reduced benefits, negotiated in plant-by-plant fashion, with local unions competing in "givebacks" under the delusion that this will help save their jobs. Lewie Anderson's reason for opposing the abandonment of chain bargaining needs no further vindication.

Ann Prosten

RADBROW

New York City

We take offense at Elizabeth Pochoda's characterization of us as a "left-leaning magazine of movies and politics" ["Reading Around," March 16]. We were born in 1967 as part of the radical movement and we have always been radical. Pochoda is definitely right in saying we are not middlebrow. She is definitely wrong in her characterization of our *Thelma & Louise* symposium. Rather than argue the point here, we'd be pleased to send a copy of the symposium to any *Nation* reader who is interested. Call (212) 982-1241.

Dan Georgakas
Cineaste

NIP IT IN THE BUD—III

Dedham, Mass.



PLEASE COME BACK, ALL IS FORGIVEN

Ah, the essays our Calvin would write
In the days when his prose had such bite.
Though his poems his targets yet
skewer,
His insights are niggling and fewer.
So bring back those columns by
Trillin—

Presuming of course that he's willin'.

Philip Rosmarin

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Manuscripts: Address to "The Editor." Not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless accompanied by addressed, stamped envelopes.

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, Inc. © 1992 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, Inc., 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. (212) 242-8400. *Washington Bureau*: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763, or call 1-800-333-8536. *Subscription Price*: 1 year, \$44; 2 years, \$75. Add \$18 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Missed issues must be claimed within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues \$4 prepaid (\$5 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. This issue went to press on May 14.

EDITORIALS.

Tuning Out PBS

PBS is a Failed Liberal Program of the sixties. In the same way that the F.L.P.s of the War on Poverty did not end poverty, so the Public Broadcasting Service and its funding operation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, did not make the "vast wasteland" of television bloom. *Sesame Street* did not appreciably educate deprived children and, perhaps most important of all, the public affairs programs from Bill Moyers to William F. Buckley did not politicize the electorate, which has been increasingly avoiding politics (if voting totals are any guide)

in rough proportion to the escalation of appropriations for PBS and C.P.B.—now in the range of \$1.1 billion over the next three years.

Certain media watch-puppies of the Reaganite right have launched a campaign to defund public broadcasting and either trash the whole operation or sell it to a private operator; Ted Turner and the BBC have been volunteered as potential buyers. That way, no one would miss the latest celebration of endangered megafauna. But the neocons are barking up the wrong tree in the PBS rain forest: They hate public television because they believe that it has succeeded, not failed; that its "liberal tilt" has tumbled too many viewers toward the left side of things; and that it has stymied the conservative project to

take over—and make over—the intellectual and cultural life of the nation.

The neocons are not poised for sudden victory in this particular battle of their *Kulturkampf*, nor did they win their campaign against the National Endowment for the Arts, where the stakes were strikingly similar. PBS has too many friends in high places—the national press, the Democratic leadership, the corporate elite. It was against just such a day as this that PBS became the Petroleum Broadcasting System, and allowed itself to be bought by the economic forces that might extend its life.

But in the long term, PBS appears to be as endangered as any species-of-the-week on *Nature*. The reason is that public broadcasting has failed to develop a constituency that really needs it. In the face of attacks from Jesse Helms and his fellow zealots, PBS has, with depressingly few exceptions, retreated into a middlebrow, middle-class ghetto where refined tastes, college credentials and white skin offer some respite but no lasting protection. When cultural Armageddon comes, the big-hearted liberals who dutifully support the chat shows and the old movie musicals will switch channels and allegiances.

In many European countries, the airwaves are divvied up among various sectors of society, in the manner of political proportional representation. In the Netherlands, for instance, the anarchists, the Catholics, the solid burghers and other groups have time on the air and production subsidies. But American broadcasting, like American politics, is a winner-take-all affair. The narrow PBS audience cannot indefinitely command the entire allotment of public funds for television. If Congress will not create two, three, many public channels (and it will not), the unitary system that exists will have to extend its range to include those who still believe that there's nothing to watch on public TV. PBS won't make the effort unless an audience finds the will and the energy to fight for its channel.

House Call?

Could Bernie Sanders, America's lone independent member of Congress, end up substantially influencing the choice of our next President? Yes, and it's billionaire capitalist Ross Perot who makes the scruffy socialist from up north a presidential power player.

Assume Ross Perot stays competitive in the polls and wins enough electoral votes to deny either Bush or Clinton the 270 it takes to win. The election is then thrown into the House of Representatives, where each state delegation, regardless of size, will be entitled to cast one vote, with twenty-six votes—half the states plus one—being the magic number. (The District of Columbia, although entitled to three electoral votes, will be excluded from this “contingent election,” another price of its colonized status.)

On the surface the math looks excellent for the Democrats. They currently control thirty-one state delegations in the House, the Republicans control ten, eight are split and Bernie has tiny Vermont all to himself. But if the election ends up in a stalemate, it is the *newly* elected House of Representa-

tives that will choose the President. With redistricting and an extraordinary number of members retiring, it is anyone's guess as to how the new state delegations will turn out.

If the Democrats lose control of only six delegations out of the current fifteen in which they now have only a one- or two-member advantage, they will have to go hunting for another state's vote. And even if the Democrats preserve a formal majority of state delegations, they may not be able to hold on to internal majorities in each state if Clinton ends up third in the popular and Electoral College vote. After all, things will get quite hot for Democratic members from conservative states and districts that went for Bush or Perot; there will be great pressure for them to follow the popular vote totals.

You can spin the scenario a dozen different ways. But certain things seem clear. House races are crucial this year, especially in the states with closely divided delegations or a single House member (Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming). The two parties will likely steer money into the smaller states, and progressive money will be well spent on Sanders's re-election in Vermont.

In the meantime, George, Bill and Ross had better start to focus now on this curious question: What does Bernie want?

JAMIN B. RASKIN AND STEVE COBBLE

Jamin B. Raskin is a law professor at The American University. Steve Cobble is a political consultant living in Iowa.

Permanent Temps

Amid the predictable coverage of the predictable riots in Los Angeles, a surprising comment was made on television by Dan Torres, operations director of La Pizza Loca. Standing in front of a vandalized pizzeria (like the scene in *Do the Right Thing*), Torres agreed with reporters that neighborhood people (presumably black) were the ones who would be hurt most by the shutdowns. He explained that only 10 percent of the employees of the Pizza Loca chain are salaried. The others don't get paid when a store is closed. That should give them a stronger stake than he had, he reasoned, in keeping the outlets open.

I wasn't surprised that 90 percent of La Pizza Loca's workers are hourlies with no benefits and no set salaries. The figure is higher at McDonald's. What surprised me is the notion that hourlies have a great stake in the company.

At McDonald's a computer program tells the manager what size crew is needed each hour of the next week. On that basis “regular” employees are assigned shorter or longer hours. I've heard of fast-food workers who quit when they got the week's schedule, saying simply that they had something better to do that particular evening. That doesn't worry the manager much since the job has been designed so that a replacement can be trained in twenty minutes and come up to top speed in about half an hour.

People who drift in and out of expanding and contracting low-paid jobs used to be called the *lumpen* proletariat. *Lumpens* don't make long-range plans. They lose a job, they get kicked out of an apartment, they work a few hours to buy

themselves dinner. Their dreams of a windfall encompass a free pizza, a looted VCR, the cash in a dead man's pockets. With little stake in any ongoing enterprise, they don't really care if things burn down. This self-destructive and dangerous group is systematically created (imported if necessary) by every inegalitarian society.

In the past decades we've seen *lumpen* alienation creep up the occupational ladder as millions of Americans, clerk through executive, have become contingent or disposable workers. I happened to arrive in Cincinnati during a period when 1,500 engineers and managers were being eased out at Procter & Gamble. Among them was Tom Oppdahl, a decent, middle-aged man who had supervised a hundred engineers who designed thermal systems for P.&G. plants around the world. After a hard couple of years he found work at a job shop that does engineering on contract for—you guessed it—P.&G. "You might say he's become a high-priced consultant," said a co-worker who'd also been fired, "but in fact, Tom's now an L.O." (L.O.—low overhead—is P.&G.'s term for an office temp). The same co-worker, also re-situated, now keeps his résumé updated on the computer and vows he'll quit his new company as soon as anything better comes along, "no matter who it leaves hanging."

Between burger flipper and manager is an expanding world of contingent workers with diminished ties to companies, to fellow workers, to customers and to the world in general. Adjunct lecturers trek from university to university getting paid \$900 to \$3,500 a course. Computer programmers migrate like farm workers between Route 128 and Silicon Valley.

I met a single mother whose company had been taken over and her entire department declared "temps." She's still paid \$12.50 an hour on the word processor, but with no health insurance she has to decide whether it's worth a \$70 doctor's bill (plus the lost pay) to find out if her child's lingering sore throat is strep. And, she asked me, is it worth three times \$12.50 to take off for open school day when she can't be sure how many hours of work she'll get next week?

"The craziest thing is, now that we're temps," she said, "the same people I worked with for four years act like I came from some agency for the day. We don't exchange birthday cards, we don't get the kids together. You're alone."

None of these people are going to burn down their neighborhoods. Neither will the vast majority of ghetto residents, who are, after all, stable individuals despite the instability they face. Even the unemployed teenager, who feels more throw-away than the disposable worker, usually just hurts himself.

In the name of efficiency our enterprises have stripped down to a narrow permanent core. Around this core the typists are temps, the janitors are contracted, the engineers are consultants and the manufacturing is farmed out. At the outer periphery the black high school graduate might pick up work as a messenger, part time, as needed. The funny thing is, the people promoting this ethic of disposability, the golden parachute guys at the core, spend most of their time figuring out how to make themselves secure.

BARBARA GARSON

Barbara Garson, author of the play *MacBird* and of two books about work, *The Electronic Sweatshop* and *All the Daylong Day* (both Penguin), has written a new play, *Security*.

The Boys of Sumo

Tokyo

Ever since the ultimate Japan-basher, superstar sumo wrestler Konishiki (Salevaa Atisanoe, an American-Samoan from Hawaii), won the Emperor's Cup in the March Grand Sumo Tournament in Tokyo, controversy has raged over whether he should be promoted to sumo's highest rank, *yokozuna*. (In Japan, a *yokozuna* is as close to divine as anyone this side of the Emperor.) To make an analogy with American sports, it's like active baseball players being inducted into the Hall of Fame, facing sportswriters with the possibility that the athlete they select may do something later in his career (à la Pete Rose, for example) to sully the Hall of Fame and the sport.

That's the dilemma facing the secretive and hidebound Yokozuna Council, a committee of retired wrestlers, in selecting *yokozuna*. In recent memory, they have picked three duds who had shown great promise as *ozekis*—the rank Konishiki now holds. Having been burned badly, the council may be justified in hesitating to promote Konishiki, a sometimes

(Continued on Page 754)

★ JACK KEMP (A WHITE-GUY RAP)

April

*Jack is dissed by Bush's troops
Jack's cut out of all the loops.
White House dudes say Jack's a pain:
Jack can't tell which stream is main.
Jack still talks of urban blight.
Jack forgot the votes are white.
When the White House has a do,
Jack's as welcome as the flu.*

May

*White House dudes say, "Jack's our man.
We're behind Jack's housing plan.
Jack's the greatest. Jack's the top.
Jack's our favorite photo op.
Urban program? There's no lack
(Get the details there from Jack).
Jack's the coolest of them all.
We're with Jack, at least till fall."*

Calvin Trillin

BEAT THE DEVIL.

Reason and Violence

As Monster Kody, the well-known 27-year-old 8-Trey Crip, put it from a prison in San Bernardino after I had asked him how he would define politics, "The relations between people centered on the seizure and retention of state power." He added that "it was sad that it had to come to this [i.e., the riot] to get attention." Monster Kody continued to discuss social



relations and the prospects, post-riot, for political change in Los Angeles in a manner that did shame to the sentiments of many commentators pondering the urban crisis from a more comfortable station in life.

Writing in *L.A. Weekly*, its executive editor, Harold Meyerson (a member, I need hardly say, of D.S.A. and mustard-keen on Bill Clinton), remarked that "even on the wacko nether regions of what remains of the American left, this will be a hard riot to romanticize." There may not have been romance but there certainly was reason, and a plan. It takes forethought to burn down 2,000 Korean stores.

As for mini-malls—running on average at 40 percent over-capacity in Los Angeles—the torchings were a promising start, though they did not go nearly far enough. There are still too many of these speculative developments, rushed up in the go-go eighties and mostly economic deathtraps to small entrepreneurs. The biggest architectural loss was Young's Market Building, originally Andrew's Hardware, built on the corner of 7th and Union in 1924. It was a fine structure designed by Charles Plummer as a mixed homage to Maybeck and the Beaux Arts tradition. I worried about Bullocks on Wilshire, but Herman Sachs's aeronautic ceiling murals, done in 1928, came through.

The right has it figured the way it always does. Bruce Herschensohn, an L.A. television pundit (and old Nixon favorite) seeking the Republican nomination for Alan Cranston's Senate seat, proclaimed in the wake of the riots that "some people are rotten" and derided the idea of underlying social causes.

Picking up on Herschensohn's demon-seed theory, the federal Centers for Disease Control announced that teams of researchers were being dispatched to investigate the "epidemiology" of the riots. We called the C.D.C. to see if this was a search for the dreaded riot virus (sterilization only known cure), and Dr. James Mercy told my colleague Bryce Hoffman that injury is the leading cause of death for people under 45 and that it has become a public health issue: "We would do the same thing in any national disaster."

Hammer and Nails

In a month or so, when the camera crews have left South Central and Pico-Union and weeds begin to poke their way up through the asphalt in the burned-out lots along Crenshaw, Vermont and Western, it will be easy enough to see who was just talking and who had a genuine plan. At the official level, the only proposal that attempts to grapple with reality is the \$35 billion urban rescue package urged by big-city mayors before the L.A. riots and now pushed with fresh

ardor by Jerry Brown and the Congressional Black Caucus.

This has been treated with scorn by the neoliberals around Clinton and the conservatives around Bush as "throwing money at problems," to be rejected in favor of hot air (Clinton) or "free enterprise zones" (Bush)—the only scheme of Reagan's old supply-side lobby that hasn't yet melted down in the crucible of reality, simply because it hasn't been tried. What people miss is that South Central is already the absolute definition of a free enterprise zone, with substandard wages, incoherent development, profits exported from the community.

The only plan that breathes the concrete expectations and desires of people in South Central is one issued under the name of the Bloods and Crips, which is why I was talking to Monster Kody. The plan, which I cite below, is a coherent outline of community needs, with a price tag of \$3.7 billion over and above existing appropriations.

What worried me about the plan, which has been leading a fairly legendary existence around Los Angeles since the second week of May, was that it might have been inauthentic and less connected to the gangs and South Central neighborhoods than it pretends. "People underestimate gang members," Monster Kody said, adding that the plan "is from the grass roots, and most of us O.G.s [original gangsters] support it." The provenance is still a little murky, though a local Coalition for Justice may be involved. Here are some excerpts from the plan, to which was appended an ultimatum for targeting the police which appears, at least now, to have been hollow. Start with the conditions of everyday life:

BLOODS/CRIPS PROPOSAL FOR LA'S FACE-LIFT (\$2 BILLION)

Every burned and abandoned structure shall be gutted. The city will purchase the property . . . and build a community center. If the structure is on a corner lot or is a vacant lot, the city will build a career counseling center or a recreation center, respectively.

All pavements/sidewalks in Los Angeles are in dire need of resurfacing. . . . Our organization will assist the city in the identification of all areas of concern.

All lighting will be increased in all neighborhoods. Additionally, lighting of city streets, neighborhood blocks and alleyways will be amended. We want a well-lit neighborhood. All alleys shall be painted white or yellow. . . .

All trees will be properly trimmed and maintained. We want all weeded/shrubbed areas to be cleaned up and properly nurtured. New trees will be planted to increase the beauty of our neighborhoods.

A special task force shall be assigned to focus on the clean-up of all vacant lots and trashed areas throughout the deprived areas. Proper pest control methods shall be implemented by the city to reduce the chances of rodent scattering. The city will declare a neighborhood clean-up week wherein all residents will be responsible for their block—a block captain will be assigned to ensure cooperation. Residents will clean up the block in unisys [sic].

Continue with an education plan that—besides demanding rehabbing and resupply of schools, a new minimum salary of \$30,000 for teachers and re-elections for the School

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Board—reflects the concerns, and even more frivolous desires, of people who want to learn in dignity:

BLOODS/CRIPS EDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL (\$700 MILLION)

All schools shall have new landscaping and more plants and trees around the schools; completely upgrade the bathrooms, making them more modern; provide a bathroom monitor to each bathroom which will provide freshen-up toiletries at a minimum cost to the students. . . .

A provision for accelerated educational learning programs shall be implemented for the entire Los Angeles Unified School District to provide aggressive teaching methods and provide a curriculum similar to non-economically deprived areas. Tutoring for all subjects . . . will be mandatory for all students with sub-level grades.

In these after-school tutorial programs, those students whose grades are up to par will receive federally funded bonus bonds which will be applied to their continued education upon graduation from high school. They will also receive bonus bonds for extra scholastic work towards their fellow students. . . .

High achievers in these areas [math and science] shall be granted a free trip to another country for educational exchange. . . .

The LAUSD will provide up-to-date books to the neglected areas and enough books to ensure that no student has to share a book with another. . . .

LAUSD will remove all teachers not planning to further their education along with teachers who have not proven to have a passionate concern for the students. . . . All teachers shall be given a standard competency test to verify they are up-to-date with subjects and modern teaching methods. Psychological testing will also be required for all teachers and educational administrators, including the Los Angeles School Board, every four years.

All curriculums shall focus on the basics in high school requirements . . . inundated with advanced sciences and additional applied math, English and writing skills.

Busing shall become non-existent in our communities if all of the above demands are met.

As part of their human welfare plan, the gangs propose three new hospitals, forty health care centers, and dental clinics within ten miles of each community, as well as the reconstruction of city parks; and then deal with a topic on which the quackery of the Haves has exceeded all bounds:

BLOODS/CRIPS HUMAN WELFARE PROPOSAL (\$1 BILLION)

We demand that welfare be completely removed from our community and these welfare programs be replaced by state work and product manufacturing plants that provide the city with certain supplies. State monies shall only be provided for invalids and the elderly. The State of California shall provide a child welfare building to serve as day care centers for single parents. . . .

George Bush plans to turn South Central into Willie Horton for '92. Daryl Gates would like to level it:

BLOODS/CRIPS LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM (\$6 MILLION)

The Los Angeles communities are demanding that they are policed and patrolled by individuals who live in the community and the commanding officers be ten-year residents of the community in which they serve. Former gang members shall be

given a chance to be patrol buddies in assisting in the protection of the neighborhoods. These former gang members will be required to go through police training and must comply to all of the laws instituted by our established authorities. Uniforms will be issued to each and every member of the "buddy system", however, no weapons will be issued. . . . Each buddy patrol will be supplied with a video camera and will tape each event and the officers handling the police matter. The buddy patrol will not interfere with any police matter unless instructed by a commanding officer. . . .

As against redlining, there is this:

BLOODS/CRIPS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

(\$20 MILLION) Loans shall be made available by the federal and state governments to provide interested minority entrepreneurs interested in doing business in these deprived areas. . . . These loans shall not exceed a 4% interest bearing charge per year. The businessman shall not be required to have security for the loan, however, the businessman must present at least two years of business operation and taxes, with a city license before funds will be allocated. . . . Assistance for business plans shall be made available by the Small Business Administration. . . . business owners shall be required to hire 90% of their personnel from within their community. . . .

And finally:

IN RETURN FOR THESE DEMANDS THE BLOODS/CRIPS WILL:

1. Request the drug lords of Los Angeles take their monies and invest them in business and property in Los Angeles.
2. Encourage these drug lords to stop the drug traffic and get them to use the money constructively. We will match the funds of the state government appropriations and build building-for-building.
3. Additionally, we will match funds for an aids research and awareness center in South Central and Long Beach and will only hire minority researchers and physicians to assist in the aids epidemic.

**GIVE US THE HAMMER AND THE NAILS,
WE WILL REBUILD THE CITY.**

Dialectics: What Goes Around, Comes Around

Monster Kody would not fall afoul of Harold Meyerson's strictures. In fact, he remarked of the Bloods/Crips cease-fire, "I'm optimistic about the gang truce, but I'm not going to romanticize it. A lot of those people are mindless cats with weapons. But the O.G.s are moving and shaking with the community. . . . We're not anti-Korean, we're anti-exploitation," albeit adding that a great many Korean merchants were "antagonistic profiteers consistently disrespectful of our people."

Considering he is due to head back up to Pelican Bay, a thoroughly modern, horrifying top-security prison a hundred miles north of Petrolia, where he is serving a seven-year sentence for a nonlethal encounter with a crack dealer working in his neighborhood, M.K. sounded cheery enough. "A lot of us," he said by way of farewell, "continue on from the ashes and ruins of the sixties. Maybe it goes in thirty-year cycles, and we're starting to come out of it."



BELTWAY BANDITS.

■ A Soapbox Scandal:

Henry Gonzalez and the Truths of War

A heavyset, 76-year-old Hispanic-American from Texas ambles up to the lectern on the House floor. He places his thick hands on the podium and, in his deep voice, launches into a monologue on international financial skulduggery, conflicts of interest involving the most powerful men in the world, and a possible White House cover-up. All the chairs in front of him are empty. But millions, probably with some degree of puzzlement, are watching this excitable fellow, who is sitting atop a scandal of momentous proportions.

Henry Gonzalez, the chairman of the House Banking Committee, is a familiar sight to C-SPAN viewers. For the past fifteen months, he has regularly taken to the floor when there is no legislative business occurring to present speeches—called “special orders”—updating Americans on his committee’s probe of U.S.-Iraq relations before the Gulf War.

His inquiry began in the summer of 1990, when he came across a small item in *The Wall Street Journal* reporting that some \$2 billion in unauthorized credit had been issued to Iraq through the Atlanta branch of the Italian-owned Banca Nazionale del Lavoro. He had heard nothing about this from federal bank regulators and directed a committee staff member to investigate. At first, the inquiry focused only on the regulation of foreign-owned banks. But Gonzalez and his staff soon realized more was at stake. When the chairman announced he would hold hearings on B.N.L., Dick Thornburgh, then the Attorney General, requested that he refrain, out of respect for national security among other things. Justice Department and F.B.I. officials expressed little enthusiasm for Gonzalez’s curiosity. The Federal Reserve Bank was reluctant to produce documents (which Gonzalez ultimately found easier to get through an Italian senator who is examining the B.N.L. affair). “This was a strange reaction,” recalls Dennis Kane, a committee investigator. “We just wanted to get an overview of international banking.”

Gonzalez never cowered, though, and hearings commenced in October of 1990. The committee’s first major disclosure was provocative: Of the \$2.8 billion in unauthorized loans B.N.L. had made to Iraq, \$2.1 billion was guaranteed by the Commodity Credit Corporation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That meant taxpayers stood to lose billions if Iraq defaulted. Gonzalez and his aides began to consider the foreign policy dimensions of the B.N.L. case. It did not take them long to see they had only grabbed hold of the tail.

Bombs Away

Gonzalez began his series of special orders on February 4, 1991, as U.S. bombers pounded Iraq. He was no amateur to the art form, having taken to the well in years previous to demand the impeachment of Ronald Reagan for the Iran/*contra* deals and to condemn the invasion of Panama. His rhetoric is lofty, his speeches full of anger and long asides—on the decline of the dollar, the history of banking law, weapons proliferation, the U.S.-Mexico free-trade agreement. This time he began with a story. In the 1930s the trolley tracks in his hometown of San Antonio were torn up and sold to Japan

as scrap. Those who complained that the steel might someday be shot back at U.S. soldiers were called fools. “We do not seem to learn anything,” Gonzalez lamented, assessing U.S. policy toward Iraq in the 1980s.

He laid out the scenario: Until it was raided by federal agents in July of 1989, B.N.L.-Atlanta had, through its loans, assisted Iraq in obtaining almost a billion dollars’ worth of agricultural commodities, freeing up Baghdad’s scarce foreign exchange to procure military equipment. B.N.L. loans were also linked to a network of Western companies that sold military-related technology to Iraq. At the time it was official U.S. policy not to arm Iraq. Gonzalez wondered aloud what U.S. intelligence had known about this effort and how the Reagan and Bush administrations had viewed Iraq’s covert acquisitions. After all, Washington had helped to engineer a draw in the Iran-Iraq war, and afterward wanted Iraq to remain a counterweight to Iran. The basic issue for Gonzalez was simple: Did the U.S. government, perhaps by breaking or bending laws, create its own demon in a mightily armed Saddam Hussein? If so, who knew about this and had there been any effort to cover it up?

With little fanfare Gonzalez continued his inquiry, and through the spring of 1991 he returned to the empty chamber to present new evidence. Into the record he introduced portions of a 1990 U.S.D.A. memo revealing that a high-ranking Administration official was worried that Congress might discover that B.N.L. had financed Iraq’s purchase of military goods. Gonzalez assembled lists of U.S. goods sold to Iraq that had military uses and that were underwritten by the U.S. Export-Import Bank, which was not supposed to support military sales. Gonzalez maintains that of 187 Ex-Im Bank transactions, only a small number were checked in advance for unconventional military applications.

Regarding Henry

Gonzalez, a cheeky man, has dared to chase after the Bigfoot of international politics. As he is fond of noting, geopolitical-strategist-for-hire Henry Kissinger was on a consulting board for the Rome-based B.N.L., and B.N.L. was a client of Kissinger Associates. A Kissingerian trail snakes through B.N.L. territory, and Gonzalez has howled about apparent conflicts of interest. Lawrence Eagleburger, president of Kissinger Associates before becoming Deputy Secretary of State in 1989, met with B.N.L. managers in 1987 or 1988, according to what Renato Guadagnini, the former head of B.N.L.’s U.S. operations, told the Banking Committee. He was also a director of a Yugoslav bank that had close ties to B.N.L. As a Kissinger associate, Brent Scowcroft, now National Security Adviser, worked on the firm’s B.N.L. account.

The trouble is that after their stints with Kissinger, both Eagleburger and Scowcroft entered government and played key roles in promoting policies that benefited B.N.L., their former client. Each then participated in the handling of the B.N.L. scandal. Eagleburger, for instance, oversaw the State Department’s side of the investigation. Gonzalez has also excoriated Scowcroft for maintaining a stock portfolio that can be affected by National Security Council actions, and has

DAVID CORN

questioned Eagleburger's influence on Ex-Im Bank decisions on projects in Yugoslavia. Gonzalez is careful to note that as yet he has no proof that Kissinger and Co. knew of B.N.L.'s secret loans to Iraq.

Occasionally, an enlightened member of Congress decries the revolving door through which government officials enter the world of high-paying lobbying. Gonzalez has set his sights on a cosmic version of that game.

Bush: Let It Roll

This past February, Gonzalez renewed his series of special orders. In one speech, using documents the committee obtained, he showed that throughout the 1980s the White House—including Vice President Bush—lobbied the Export-Import Bank to support commercial deals with Iraq. In 1983 Eagleburger, then a Deputy Undersecretary of State, pushed the bank to finance the sale of American goods to Iraq. In 1987 Bush intervened to insure the bank's approval of a \$200 million short-term credit program for Iraq at a time when some officials at the bank advised placing all credit to Iraq on hold. B.N.L. handled much of the Ex-Im Bank credits. In 1990 Bush, now President, waived a prohibition on Ex-Im Bank deals with Iraq that was mandated by law because of Iraq's record of human rights abuses.

The urge to build up Iraq was a strong one. Even after the B.N.L. scandal broke in 1989 and the Bush Administration received reports that the Iraqis had diverted U.S.D.A. commodity credits for arms, Secretary of State James Baker lobbied the Agriculture Department and Eagleburger pressed skeptics at the Treasury Department and at the Office of Management and Budget to approve a new \$1 billion commodity credit program for Iraq. At an October 13, 1989, meeting, one U.S.D.A. official reported that the U.S. Attorney had said Iraq possibly had diverted funds to procure nuclear equipment. (B.N.L.'s deals with Iraq at one point involved some nuclear riggers.) "We should proceed carefully," a post-meeting memo said. "If smoke indicates fire, we may be facing a four-alarm blaze in the near-future."

The Bush Administration did not heed this advice. In November of 1989, the National Advisory Council, a high-level interagency group that reviews international lending policies, OK'd the billion-dollar commodities project. A State Department official cited Bush's wish to avoid "a deterioration" of U.S.-Iraq relations as the justification for approval.

Watching the Detective

Gonzalez's net is wide. One document he disclosed—May 16, 1990, State Department memo—indicates that at that time the C.I.A. shared intelligence with Iraq. During last year's nomination hearings for C.I.A. chief Robert Gates, there was discussion of this intelligence exchange, but an Intelligence Committee report issued after the hearing, and based on information provided by the C.I.A. and Gates, noted that the arrangement with Iraq had ended in 1988. The 1990 memo, therefore, suggests that the agency and maybe Gates misled the committee. (At a May 8 Banking Committee hearing, in front of Gonzalez, Gates admitted that in the fall of 1989 the

C.I.A. reported that Saddam Hussein would not attack any of his neighbors in the next two or three years.) Gonzalez also introduced material showing that the Bush Administration dragged its feet on prosecutions in the B.N.L. case. An April 5, 1990, Federal Reserve memo noted that difficulties in the case brought against B.N.L. by the U.S. Attorney in Atlanta "have been compounded by what is perceived as interference from the Justice Department in Washington."

Gonzalez's efforts appear to have unnerved some top Bush aides. Last year, the National Security Council convened a high-level interagency meeting to discuss his and related Congressional investigations. The purpose was damage control, at least according to minutes and memos Gonzalez obtained. At one session, attended by C. Boyden Gray, the President's counsel; Nicholas Rostow, general counsel to the N.S.C.; Elizabeth Rindskopf, the C.I.A.'s top lawyer; and others, the subject was how to respond to Congressional requests for information. One participant suggested offering briefings instead of actual documents. Another recommended that agencies only allow legislators to look at documents, not provide them with copies. Scowcroft's N.S.C. insisted on coordinating all requests for documents and ordered government agencies not to release Iraq-related material on their own.

Respect, the Hard Way

The Banking Committee is pressing on. Gonzalez plans to hold hearings soon on the 1989 billion-dollar credit deal with Iraq and on the Congress-monitoring activities of the N.S.C. His inquiry is zeroing in on the possibility that U.S.D.A. commodity credits were diverted and traded for weapons. The committee has asked U.S. intelligence organizations, including the C.I.A., if they picked up indications of such diversions. It was told that no intelligence agency did. But unofficially the committee has also heard from one C.I.A. officer that intelligence related to diversions was collected.

Gonzalez's subject is the very nature of the U.S. government: how and why crucial decisions are made. The conspiracy he is chasing—that Bush and others plotted to keep U.S. credits, technology and intelligence flowing to Iraq in the face of objections from some agencies and evidence that B.N.L. loans and commodity credits were being used to purchase conventional and unconventional weaponry—may be as significant as any other scandal Washington has known.

A thirty-year veteran of the House, Gonzalez, who became chairman of the committee in 1989, has in the past been dismissed as one of those slightly kooky members who speaks his mind too freely and pursues causes—the impeachment of Reagan—that are not respected by the respectable. Some used to call him Chairman Aquino, because there was often talk of a coup that would oust him as head of the Banking Committee. But as he doggedly pursues this investigation, established Washington has had to pay attention. *The Washington Post* recently began covering his work in detail. William Safire, the conservative *New York Times* columnist, says "Democrats have their election-year Watergate, but only Henry Gonzalez . . . understands it." Gonzalez deserves close watching. By the way, he didn't bounce a single check.

Marlene and Me

EDWARD SOREL



YES, I KNEW HER. NO, NOT IN THE BIBLICAL SENSE, BUT FOR A BRIEF TIME—TOO BRIEF—WE WERE VERY CLOSE.



DON'T
DO
ANY-
THING
I
WOULDN'T
DO

I WAS WORKING AT MUSICRAFT RECORDS AND LATE ONE DAY WAS TOLD TO PICK UP A PACKAGE FROM A MRS SIEBER AND BRING IT BACK IN THE MORNING. THEN THEY TOLD ME WHO "MRS. SIEBER" WAS.



THE DOORMAN LET ME UP, AND WHEN I RANG THE BELL SHE HERSELF CAME TO THE DOOR. SHE WAS SHORTER THAN I EXPECTED AND I COULD SEE SHE USED LOTS OF MAKEUP. AS I SAID, WE WERE VERY CLOSE.



ICH SAGTE
IHM SEIN
GELD WEG
ZULE-
GEN

I COULDN'T RESIST OPENING THE PACKAGE. IT CONTAINED A RECORD SHE MADE IN GERMANY BEFORE COMING TO AMERICA. BECAUSE I UNDERSTOOD YIDDISH I WAS ABLE TO MAKE OUT THE LYRICS, VERY SEXY.



AFTER THAT ENCOUNTER I WENT OUT OF MY WAY TO SEE HER EARLY MOVIES, AND I READ EVERYTHING I COULD ABOUT HER. OF COURSE I NEVER MET HER AGAIN...



... BUT I SOMEHOW FELT HURT WHEN HER OBIT IN THE TIMES FAILED TO MENTION MY NAME.

ARTICLES.

■ URBAN AMERICA SEES ITS FUTURE

In L.A., Burning
All Illusions

MIKE DAVIS

Los Angeles

The armored personnel carrier squats on the corner like *un gran sapo feo*—"a big ugly toad"—according to 9-year-old Emerio. His parents talk anxiously, almost in a whisper, about the *desaparecidos*: Raul from Tepic, big Mario, the younger Flores girl and the cousin from Ahuachapan. Like all Salvadorans, they know about those who "disappear"; they remember the headless corpses and the man whose tongue had been pulled through the hole in his throat like a necktie. That is why they came here—to ZIP code 90057, Los Angeles, California.

Now they are counting their friends and neighbors, Salvadoran and Mexican, who are suddenly gone. Some are still in the County Jail on Bauchet Street, little more than brown grains of sand lost among the 17,000 other alleged *saqueadores* (looters) and *incendarios* (arsonists) detained after the most violent American civil disturbance since the Irish poor burned Manhattan in 1863. Those without papers are probably already back in Tijuana, broke and disconsolate, cut off from their families and new lives. Violating city policy, the police fed hundreds of hapless undocumented *saqueadores* to the I.N.S. for deportation before the A.C.L.U. or immigrant rights groups even realized they had been arrested.

For many days the television talked only of the "South Central riot," "black rage" and the "Crips and Bloods." But Emerio's parents know that thousands of their neighbors from the MacArthur Park district—home to nearly one-tenth of all the Salvadorans in the world—also looted, burned, stayed out past curfew and went to jail. (An analysis of the first 5,000 arrests from all over the city revealed that 52 percent were poor Latinos, 10 percent whites and only 38 percent blacks.) They also know that the nation's first multiracial riot was as much about empty bellies and broken hearts as it was about police batons and Rodney King.

The week before the riot was unseasonably hot. At night he people lingered outside on the stoops and sidewalks of their tenements (MacArthur Park is L.A.'s Spanish Harlem), talking about their new burden of trouble. In a neighborhood far more crowded than mid-Manhattan and more dangerous than downtown Detroit, with more crack addicts and gang-bangers than registered voters, *la gente* know how to laugh away every disaster except the final one. Yet there was a new melancholy in the air.

Too many people have been losing their jobs: their *pinche* \$5.25-an-hour jobs as seamstresses, laborers, busboys and fac-

tory workers. In two years of recession, unemployment has tripled in L.A.'s immigrant neighborhoods. At Christmas more than 20,000 predominantly Latina women and children from throughout the central city waited all night in the cold to collect a free turkey and a blanket from charities. Other visible barometers of distress are the rapidly growing colonies of homeless *compañeros* on the desolate flanks of Crown Hill and in the concrete bed of the L.A. River, where people are forced to use sewage water for bathing and cooking.

As mothers and fathers lose their jobs, or as unemployed relatives move under the shelter of the extended family, there is increasing pressure on teenagers to supplement the family income. Belmont High School is the pride of "Little Central America," but with nearly 4,500 students it is severely overcrowded, and an additional 2,000 students must be bused to distant schools in the San Fernando Valley and elsewhere. Fully 7,000 school-age teenagers in the Belmont area, moreover, have dropped out of school. Some have entered the *vida loca* of gang culture (there are 100 different gangs in the school district that includes Belmont High), but most are struggling to find minimum-wage footholds in a declining economy.

The neighbors in MacArthur Park whom I interviewed, such as Emerio's parents, all speak of this gathering sense of unease, a perception of a future already looted. The riot arrived like a magic dispensation. People were initially shocked by the violence, then mesmerized by the televised images of biracial crowds in South Central L.A. helping themselves to mountains of desirable goods without interference from the police. The next day, Thursday, April 30, the authorities blundered twice: first by suspending school and releasing the kids into the streets; second by announcing that the National Guard was on the way to help enforce a dusk-to-dawn curfew.

Thousands immediately interpreted this as a last call to participate in the general redistribution of wealth in progress. Looting spread with explosive force throughout Hollywood and MacArthur Park, as well as parts of Echo Park, Van Nuys and Huntington Park. Although arsonists spread terrifying destruction, the looting crowds were governed by a visible moral economy. As one middle-aged lady explained to me, "Stealing is a sin, but this is like a television game show where everyone in the audience gets to win." Unlike the looters in Hollywood (some on skateboards) who stole Madonna's bustier and all the crotchless panties from Frederick's, the masses of MacArthur Park concentrated on the prosaic necessities of life like cockroach spray and Pampers.

Now, one week later, MacArthur Park is in a state of siege. A special "We Tip" hotline invites people to inform on neighbors or acquaintances suspected of looting. Elite L.A.P.D. Metro Squad units, supported by the National Guard, sweep through the tenements in search of stolen goods, while Border Patrolmen from as far away as Texas prowl the streets. Frantic parents search for missing kids, like mentally retarded 14-year-old Zuly Estrada, who is believed to have been deported to Mexico.

Meanwhile, thousands of *saqueadores*, many of them pathetic scavengers captured in the charred ruins the day after

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the looting, languish in County Jail, unable to meet absurdly high bails. One man, caught with a packet of sunflower seeds and two cartons of milk, is being held on \$15,000; hundreds of others face felony indictments and possible two-year prison terms. Prosecutors demand thirty-day jail sentences for curfew violators, despite the fact that many of those are either homeless street people or Spanish-speakers who were unaware of the curfew. These are the "weeds" that George Bush says we must pull from the soil of our cities before it can be sown with the regenerating "seeds" of enterprise zones and tax breaks for private capital.

A Crips/Bloods truce is the L.A.P.D.'s worst imagining: gang violence politicized.

There is rising apprehension that the entire community will become a scapegoat. An ugly, seal-the-border nativism has been growing like crabgrass in Southern California since the start of the recession. A lynch mob of Orange County Republicans, led by Representative Dana Rohrabacher of Huntington Beach, demands the immediate deportation of all the undocumented immigrants arrested in the disturbance, while liberal Democrat Anthony Beilenson, sounding like the San Fernando Valley's Son-of-Le-Pen, proposes to strip citizenship from the U.S.-born children of illegals. According to Roberto Lovato of MacArthur Park's Central American Refugee Center, "We are becoming the guinea pigs, the Jews, in the militarized laboratory where George Bush is inventing his new urban order."

A Black Intifada?

"Little Gangster" Tak can't get over his amazement that he is actually standing in the same room of Brother Aziz's mosque with a bunch of Inglewood Crips. The handsome, 22-year-old Tak, a "straight up" Inglewood Blood who looks more like a black angel by Michelangelo than one of the Boyz N the Hood, still has two Crip bullets in his body, and "they still carry a few of mine." Some of the Crips and Bloods, whose blue or red gang colors have been virtual tribal flags, remember one another from school playground days, but mainly they have met over the barrels of automatics in a war that has divided Inglewood—the pleasant, black-majority city southwest of L.A. where the Lakers play—by a river of teenage blood. Now, as Tak explains, "Everybody knows what time it is. If we don't end the killing now and unite as black men, we never will."

Although Imam Aziz and the Nation of Islam have provided the formal auspices for peacemaking, the real hands that have "tied the red and blue rags together into a 'black thang'" are in Simi Valley. Within a few hours of the first attack on white motorists, which started in 8-Trey (83rd Street) Gangster Crip territory near Florence and Normandie, the insatiable war between the Crips and Bloods, fueled by a thou-

sand neighborhood vendettas and dead homeboys, was "put on hold" throughout Los Angeles and the adjacent black suburbs of Compton and Inglewood.

Unlike the 1965 rebellion, which broke out south of Watts and remained primarily focused on the poorer east side of the ghetto, the 1992 riot reached its maximum temperature along Crenshaw Boulevard—the very heart of black Los Angeles's more affluent west side. Despite the illusion of full-immersion "actuality" provided by the minicam and the helicopter, television's coverage of the riot's angry edge was even more twisted than the melted steel of Crenshaw's devastated shopping centers. Most reporters—"image looters" as they are now being called in South Central—merely lip-synched suburban clichés as they tramped through the ruins of lives they had no desire to understand. A violent kaleidoscope of bewildering complexity was flattened into a single, categorical scenario: legitimate black anger over the King decision hijacked by hard-core street criminals and transformed into a maddened assault on their own community.

Local television thus unwittingly mimed the McCone Commission's summary judgment that the August 1965 Watts riot was primarily the act of a hoodlum fringe. In that case, a subsequent U.C.L.A. study revealed that the "riot of the riffraff" was in fact a popular uprising involving at least 50,000 working-class adults and their teenage children. When the arrest records of this latest uprising are finally analyzed, they will probably also vindicate the judgment of many residents that all segments of black youth, gang and non-gang, "buppie" as well as underclass, took part in the disorder.

Although in Los Angeles, as elsewhere, the new black middle class has socially and spatially pulled farther apart from the deindustrialized black working class, the L.A.P.D.'s Operation Hammer and other antigang dragnets that arrested kids at random (entering their names and addresses into an electronic gang roster that is now proving useful in house-to-house searches for riot "ringleaders") have tended to criminalize black youth without class distinction. Between 1987 and 1990, the combined sweeps of the L.A.P.D. and the County Sheriff's Office ensnared 50,000 "suspects." Even the children of doctors and lawyers from View Park and Windsor Hills have had to "kiss the pavement" and occasionally endure some of the humiliations that the homeboys in the flats face every day—experiences that reinforce the reputation of the gangs (and their poets laureate, the gangster rappers like Ice Cube and N.W.A.) as the heroes of an outlaw generation.

Yet if the riot had a broad social base, it was the participation of the gangs—or, rather, their cooperation—that gave it constant momentum and direction. If the 1965 rebellion was a hurricane, leveling one hundred blocks of Central Avenue from Vernon to Imperial Highway, the 1992 riot was a tornado, no less destructive but snaking a zigzag course through the commercial areas of the ghetto and beyond. Most of the media saw no pattern in its path, just blind, nihilistic destruction. In fact, the arson was ruthlessly systematic. By Friday morning 90 percent of the myriad Korean-owned liquor stores, markets and swapmeets in South Central L.A. had been wiped out. Deserted by the L.A.P.D., which made no attempt to defend small businesses, the Koreans suffered dam-

age or destruction to almost 2,000 stores from Compton to the heart of Koreatown itself. One of the first to be attacked (although, ironically, it survived) was the grocery store where 15-year-old Latasha Harlins was shot in the back of the head last year by Korean grocer Soon Ja Du in a dispute over a \$1.79 bottle of orange juice. The girl died with the money for her purchase in her hand.

Latasha Harlins. A name that was scarcely mentioned on television was the key to the catastrophic collapse of relations between L.A.'s black and Korean communities. Ever since white judge Joyce Karlin let Du off with a \$500 fine and some community service—a sentence which declared that the taking of a black child's life was scarcely more serious than drunk driving—some interethnic explosion has been virtually inevitable. The several near-riots at the Compton courthouse this winter were early warning signals of the black community's unassuaged grief over Harlins's murder. On the streets of South Central Wednesday and Thursday, I was repeatedly told, "This is for our baby sister. This is for Latasha."

The balance of grievances in the community is complex. Rodney King is the symbol that links unleashed police racism in Los Angeles to the crisis of black life everywhere, from Las Vegas to Toronto. Indeed, it is becoming clear that the King case may be almost as much of a watershed in American history as Dred Scott, a test of the very meaning of the citizenship for which African-Americans have struggled for 400 years.

But on the grass-roots level, especially among gang youth, Rodney King may not have quite the same profound resonance. As one of the Inglewood Bloods told me: "Rodney King? Shit, my homies be beat like dogs by the police every day. This riot is about all the homeboys murdered by the police, about the little sister killed by the Koreans, about twenty-seven years of oppression. Rodney King just the trigger."

At the same time, those who predicted that the next L.A. riot would be a literal Armageddon have been proved wrong. Despite a thousand Day-Glo exhortations on the walls of South Central to "Kill the Police," the gangs have refrained from the deadly guerrilla warfare that they are so formidably equipped to conduct. As in 1965, there has not been a single L.A.P.D. fatality, and indeed few serious police injuries of any kind.

In this round, at least, the brunt of gang power was directed toward the looting and destruction of the Korean stores. If Latasha Harlins is the impassioned pretext, there may be other agendas as well. I saw graffiti in South Central that advocated "Day one: burn them out. Day two: we rebuild." The only national leader whom most Crips and Bloods seem to take seriously is Louis Farrakhan, and his goal of black economic self-determination is broadly embraced. (Farrakhan, it should be emphasized, has never advocated violence as a means to this end.) At the Inglewood gang summit, which took place on May 5, there were repeated references to a renaissance of black capitalism out of the ashes of Korean businesses. "After all," an ex-Crip told me later, "we didn't burn our community, just *their* stores."

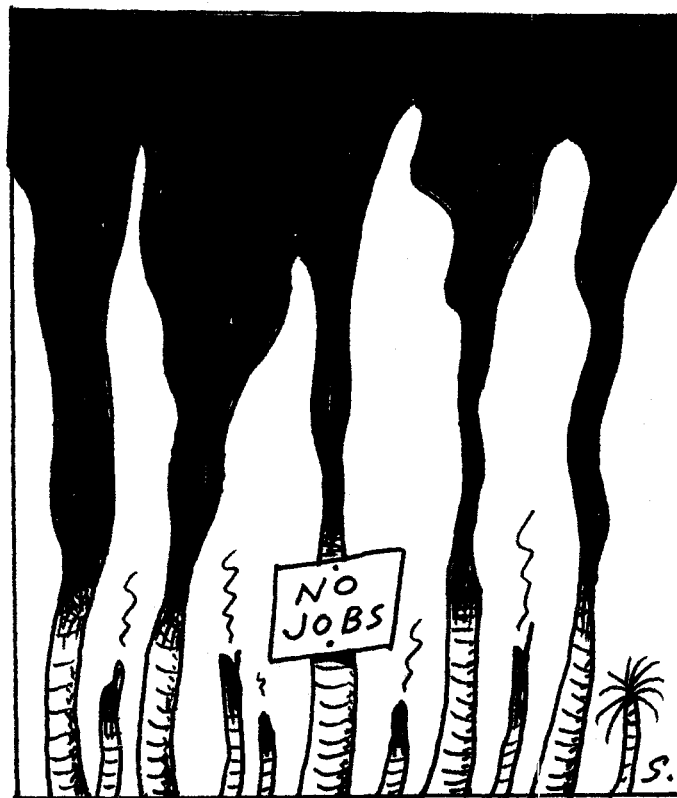
In the meantime, the police and military occupiers of Los Angeles give no credence to any peaceful, let alone entrepreneurial, transformation of L.A.'s black gang cultures. The

ecumenical movement of the Crips and Bloods is their worst imagining: gang violence no longer random but politicized into a black *intifada*. The L.A.P.D. remembers only too well that a generation ago the Watts rebellion produced a gang peace out of which grew the Los Angeles branch of the Black Panther Party. As if to prove their suspicions, the police have circulated a copy of an anonymous and possibly spurious leaflet calling for gang unity and "an eye for an eye. . . . If L.A.P.D. hurt a black we'll kill two."

For its part, the Bush Administration has federalized the repression in L.A. with an eye to the spectacle of the President marching in triumph, like a Roman emperor, with captured Crips and Bloods in chains. Thus, the Justice Department has dispatched to L.A. the same elite task force of federal marshals who captured Manuel Noriega in Panama as reinforcements for L.A.P.D. and F.B.I. efforts to track down the supposed gang instigators of the riot. But as a veteran of the 1965 riot said while watching SWAT teams arrest some of the hundreds of rival gang members trying to meet peacefully at Watts's Jordan Downs Housing Project: "That ole fool Bush think we as dumb as Saddam. Land Marines in Compton and get himself re-elected. But this ain't Iraq. This is Vietnam, Jack."

The Great Fear

A core grievance fueling the Watts rebellion and the subsequent urban insurrections of 1967-68 was rising black unemployment in the midst of a boom economy. What contemporary journalists fearfully described as the beginning of the "Second Civil War" was as much a protest against black America's exclusion from the military-Keynesian expansion of the 1960s as it was an uprising against police racism and de facto segregation in schools and housing. The 1992 riot and



ILLUSTRATIONS BY J.C. SUAREZ

its possible progenies must likewise be understood as insurrections against an intolerable political-economic order. As even the *Los Angeles Times*, main cheerleader for "World City L.A.," now editorially acknowledges, the "globalization of Los Angeles" has produced "devastating poverty for those weak in skills and resources."

Although the \$1 billion worth of liquor stores and mini-malls destroyed in L.A. may seem like chump change next to the \$2.6 trillion recently annihilated on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, the burning of Oz probably fits into the same Hegelian niche with the bursting of the Bubble Economy: not the "end of history" at the seacoast of Malibu but the beginning of an ominous dialectic on the rim of the Pacific. It was a hallucination in the first place to imagine that the wheel of the world economy could be turned indefinitely by a Himalaya of U.S. trade deficits and a fictitious yen.

This structural crisis of the Japan-California "co-prosperity sphere," however, threatens to translate class contradictions into interethnic conflict on both the national and local level. Culturally distinct "middleman" groups—ethnic entrepreneurs and the like—risk being seen as the personal representatives of the invisible hand that has looted local communities of economic autonomy. In the case of Los Angeles, it was tragically the neighborhood Korean liquor store, not the skyscraper corporate fortress downtown, that became the symbol of a despised new world order.

On their side, the half-million Korean-Americans in L.A. have been psychologically lacerated by the failure of the state to protect them against black rage. Indeed, several young Koreans told me that they were especially bitter that the South Central shopping malls controlled by Alexander Haagen, a wealthy contributor to local politics, were quickly defended by police and National Guard, while their stores were leisurely ransacked and burned to the ground. "Maybe this is what we get," a U.C.L.A. student said, "for uncritically buying into the white middle class's attitude toward blacks and its faith in the police."

The prospects for a multicultural reconciliation in Los Angeles depend much less on white knight Peter Ueberroth's committee of corporate rebuilders than upon a general economic recovery in Southern California. As the *Los Angeles Business Journal* complained (after noting that L.A. had lost 100,000 manufacturing jobs over the past three years), "The riots are like poison administered to a sick patient."

Forecasts still under wraps at the Southern California Association of Governments paint a dark future for the Land of Sunshine, as job growth, slowed by the decline of aerospace as well as manufacturing shifts to Mexico, lags far behind population increase. Unemployment rates—not counting the estimated 40,000 jobs lost from the riot, and the uprising's impact on the business climate—are predicted to remain at 8 to 10 percent (and 40 to 50 percent for minority youth) for the next generation, while the housing crisis, already the most acute in the nation, will spill over into new waves of homelessness. Thus, the "widening divide" of income inequality in Los Angeles County, described in a landmark 1988 study by U.C.L.A. professor Paul Ong, will become an unbridgeable chasm. Southern California's endless summer is finally over.

Affluent Angelenos instinctively sensed this as they patrolled their Hancock Park estates with shotguns or bolted in their BMWs for white sanctuaries in Orange and Ventura counties. From Palm Springs poolsides they anxiously awaited news of the burning of Beverly Hills by the Crips and Bloods, and fretted over the extra set of house keys they had foolishly entrusted to the Latina maid. Was she now an incendiary? Although their fears were hysterically magnified, tentacles of disorder did penetrate such sanctums of white life as the Beverly Center and Westwood Village, as well as the Melrose and Fairfax neighborhoods. Most alarmingly, the L.A.P.D.'s "thin blue line," which had protected them in 1965, was now little more than a defunct metaphor, the last of Chief Gates's bad jokes. □

■ FAX FROM L.A.

Images of the Surreal City

JEN NESSEL

I looted. I took a pair of plastic dangly clip-on earrings from the rubble I was sweeping from a burned-out, low-rent store on Santa Monica and Western. Those earrings are my souvenirs of the L.A. riots of '92.

Los Angeles has to be about the most surreal place in the world a person could experience rioting. On Thursday afternoon, in the midst of torchings, beatings and rampaging, our Mayor urged us—no, implored us all—to stay home and watch *The Cosby Show*. Arsenio Hall was hangin' in the missions and Edward James Olmos was taking a broom to the streets. Over on a soundstage in Burbank, celebrities were lining up to film public service announcements to stop the violence: Debbie Allen; Wesley Snipes; Chris Rock from *Saturday Night Live*; Luke Perry, teen heartthrob from *Beverly Hills 90210* (probably the ZIP code least affected during the whole insurrection); Anjelica Huston (Anjelica Huston?); and Sean Penn. The pugnacious Penn telling us that violence wasn't the way to deal with our anger wasn't even the height of absurdity during the crisis. I'm not sure what was. Maybe it was the Scientologists in their paramilitary uniforms forming a human barricade around the twelve-story L. Ron Hubbard Life Exhibition building on Hollywood and Ivar Friday night. Or maybe it was the brainless woman interviewing Blair Underwood of *L.A. Law* who asked him to make a comparison with the Watts riots of '65 based on his having been in a movie about them (too many years of Reagan's movie war stories, I guess).

The most absurd moment I witnessed personally came during a break in the cleanup in South Central on Saturday afternoon. A young actress who once starred in a long-running sitcom and later in a babes-in-a-band-at-the-beach movie felt

Jen Nessel is a freelance organizer and writer living in Hollywood.

the need to make an inspiring speech to the assembled crowd. Shovel in hand, she began, "Guys, this is like a zit. We've popped the zit but now we have to get at the acne underneath." More facials and deep-pore cleansing for Los Angeles—now *there's* a rallying cry. I don't mention her name because she really did mean well, and hell, at least she was out there.

While more and more fires burned across the city, from the building next door to Frederick's of Hollywood to the gas stations and mini-malls of Compton, there was no one on TV lying to us in the way we've become so accustomed to, telling us that everything was under control. The TV coverage the first two days was a virtual blanket over the city. They were on every street corner as it was happening. At one point they showed a fire on Hollywood Boulevard not two blocks from my house, and it wasn't until then that I looked out my window and saw the flames. They were everywhere with their coverage, had no commercial interruptions and no spin. It was real coverage, nothing like the video game they showed us instead of the Gulf War. By the third day, however, they had graphics. One local politician had criticized the stations for acting like "the home looting network," telling everyone where the newest target was and essentially inviting people to come on down. I can tell you the people who were looting were not dashing home to plug in their newly acquired TV sets to find out where to hit next.

Some of the criticism must have gotten to the networks, though, because as early as Friday morning they were telling us that peace had been restored; they were focusing on human interest stories and attending press conferences and interviewing "experts." Los Angeles was once again the City of Angels. Meanwhile, I was still hearing sirens, helicopters and shots out my window. It's neither inflammatory nor irresponsible to report what's going on: It's the point at which the media start self-editing and deciding to calm people down that I begin to get nervous. It's testimony to how enormous this riot was that it took them two whole days to come up with the gold-toned, three-dimensional letters moving across the screen spelling out "L.A. Riots '92."

When the commercials finally did start running again, one could only laugh. There'd be a segment on a Baskin-Robbins up in flames and then an ad for the prepacked ice-cream special they were having. Or Payless shoes, one of the chains that seemed the most targeted as I toured the wreckage on Saturday, would call out to us from the TV, "It's time to drop everything and run to Payless!" Home looting network, indeed. You wonder why Payless got hit so hard and not Ferragamo. It looks like people hit the places where they resent spending their money every day: the grocery stores, liquor stores, discount clothing and shoe stores, gas stations and 7-Elevens. There are people here and around the country saying that after the first couple of hours it wasn't political. Sure, it wasn't exactly "This CD player is for Rodney King," but a woman looting an armload of diapers that she couldn't afford to buy would suggest to me that the insurrection was entirely political. Since when are poverty, unemployment, pent-up rage, alienation and disfranchisement not political?

Tom Hayden observed that a lot of the people looting by night were coming back and taking part in the cleanup by day.

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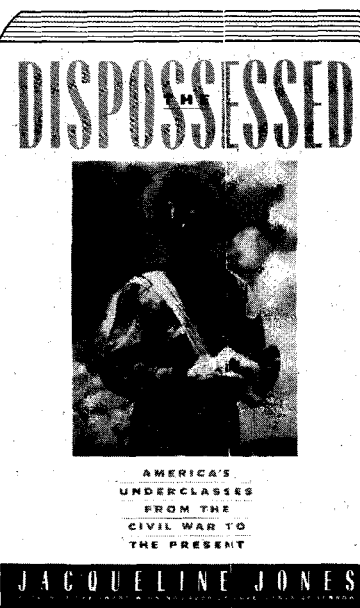
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It makes sense. If you look at some of the reasons “kids go bad” and join gangs in the first place, you’ll see that a large part of it is that they’re looking for a sense of community, of belonging, of family. There’s no morality to it, just need and insufficient options. On his Sunday morning public radio show, Harry Shearer of *Spiñal Tap* recounted Marlin Fitzwater’s responses to questions about the President’s \$92,000-a-plate dinner, which was held the day before the riot began: Yes, the guests were buying the ear of top Bush aides, they were getting involved in the government of our great nation and, well, if you didn’t have \$92,000 to spend on dinner you’d just have to find other ways to make yourself heard. Mr. President, was this loud enough for you? □

■ SALVADORAN PEACE ACCORDS

Can the Fragile Balance Hold?

SUSANNE JONAS

May Day. Amid building tensions, tens of thousands of people—workers and political activists from center to left—marched to the main plaza in the shadow of San Salvador’s majestic cathedral, demanding government compliance with the January 1992 peace accords. Three months earlier this same plaza surged with joyous popular celebrations of the agreement that ended twelve years of bloody civil war. But now the high-stakes battle over implementation of the accords is intensifying to a crisis point, sparked by government violations of key provisions. In this volatile atmosphere, daily changes punctuate the questions: Will the peace process hold? Will the agreements be fully implemented? And what kind of peace will they bring?

In their comprehensiveness and their projection of a future unlike anything El Salvador has known, the accords as signed represent a political victory for popular and revolutionary forces. They certainly add up to less than a “negotiated revolution,” as some have called them, but they reach far beyond a simple cease-fire (which the U.S. and Salvadoran governments had wanted) to address the central issues behind the war. In exchange for the F.M.L.N.’s conversion to a civilian political force, the accords—an intricate web of agreements and deadlines, each one depending for its success on the positive resolution of others—mandate a restructuring of the official armed and police forces, as well as judicial and electoral reforms. They touch, less definitively, on land tenure and socioeconomic policy, heretofore the exclusive preserve of the private sector. They also create several new institutions: the National Civilian Police, open to former F.M.L.N. combatants,

among others; the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), a decision-making body with representatives from the government, F.M.L.N. and political parties; and the 1,000-member U.N. peacekeeping mission (ONUSAL) to monitor and verify compliance. In fact, the entire settlement is viable only because of deep U.N. involvement at all stages.

The very signing of the peace accords reflected one basic reality: The civil war that broke out in 1979-80 had become unwinnable by either side. Even while mounting a strong military challenge during the 1980s, the F.M.L.N. began a difficult, often wrenching process of adapting to new circumstances. The United States was committed to defeating the F.M.L.N. decisively—viewing El Salvador as a post-Vietnam test of its counterinsurgency strategy and over the years spending nearly \$6 billion to shore up its client government, at a human cost of 75,000 civilian lives. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was retreating from even moral support for Third World revolutions, and the devastating U.S. embargo and *contra* war were transforming Sandinista Nicaragua into a negative example. Under those conditions, taking state power outright became ever less feasible. By the mid-1980s, the F.M.L.N. was combining military actions with initiatives for negotiations and power-sharing. But only after the stunning November 1989 rebel offensive in San Salvador did Washington acknowledge that the F.M.L.N. could not be defeated militarily, thus finally clearing the way for serious negotiations.

In the months since the signing of the accords, wide gaps have opened between the vision on paper and the enforcement in practice. The government, with tacit support from the United States, is waging a shrewd war of position, attempting to renegotiate on the ground what it signed in New York and Mexico City. Clearly, full implementation will require intensive domestic and international pressure.

§ *Demilitarization:* At the heart of the accords is the F.M.L.N.’s commitment to disarm and destroy its weapons by October 31 in exchange for compliance with all other provisions—most immediately and centrally, the military’s dismantling of its brutal security units, the National Guard and Treasury Police, and its submission to civilian control at half the present size. In addition, existing police units are to be replaced by the National Civilian Police, and military doctrine and training institutions are to be thoroughly overhauled.

March 2 was to have been the deadline for dissolving the security units. On that day a labor activist who had been guarding his union’s office was found hacked to death shortly before a planned protest. Meanwhile, the government merely renamed these units (as Border Guard and Military Police), and its supporters in the legislature subsequently legalized them, leaving their structures intact as well as the potential for reviving their repressive functions. The government justifies this defiance of the accords as the army’s “autonomous decision” over how to reorganize. Several thousand former National Guardsmen and Treasury Police officers are also being transferred into the old National Police, which remains active because the government is dragging its feet on creating the prescribed civilian force. These examples of government noncompliance have been broadly and vigorously denounced

Susanne Jonas, who teaches Latin American studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, has been writing about Central America since 1967. Her most recent book is The Battle for Guatemala (Westview).

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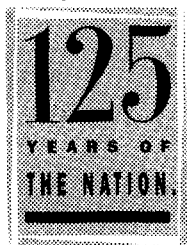
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by political and religious sectors independent of the F.M.L.N.

The army High Command is trying to cut its losses in other areas. It plans troop reductions in the rank and file, not in the officer corps. Its nightmare of sweeping trials for human rights crimes will be avoided. Most officers will be covered by the general amnesty passed in January. The human rights records of officers will be evaluated by an international commission, and major abuses on both sides will be reviewed by a Truth Commission of prominent citizens. These independent bodies will make recommendations for serious offenders, but ultimate decisions will rest with the Salvadoran judiciary, which is being only minimally reformed. In essence, the F.M.L.N. accepted less than absolute justice concerning past abuses in return for guarantees against continuing repression in the future.

§ *Democratization*: The accords legalize the F.M.L.N. as a political force and assure full rights of participation to parties of every ideological orientation. Hence, if the left is able to organize effectively, its entire agenda will be at the core of electoral politics. This is no minor achievement given the arbitrary and exclusionary nature of Salvadoran politics until now and the long list of opposition politicians assassinated for daring even to mention such issues as land reform.

But open elections by themselves will not democratize El Salvador. Elections generally favor the right, which can wage well-financed campaigns. The left will benefit from its grass-roots network, but ARENA too, the right-wing party in office since 1989, has built an impressive political apparatus with grass-roots support in many areas. The peace process has also gained it greater national legitimacy. In the 1994 general elections, voters will likely have a choice between ARENA, with its promises of international support (primarily from the United States and U.S.-controlled international banks), and more progressive forces, with limited access to such resources. The F.M.L.N. will share the field with parties such as the Christian Democrats and the Democratic Convergence, which have their own interests and agendas, their own ideas about what kinds of reforms are needed and under whose leadership. The F.M.L.N. has already had to begin rectifying past sectarian practices; its flexibility and political skill will now be tested by the more difficult challenge of participating in coalitions to defeat ARENA—situations in which it will no longer be the only major protagonist.

Beyond elections, though, the entire peace process of the past several years has resulted in new forms of popular participation. The transformation was evident in the 1988 National Debate organized by the Catholic Church and the Jesuits, through which an urgent consensus for peace emerged. Subsequently, the negotiation table itself became, in the words of F.M.L.N. leader Fermán Cienfuegos, a “parallel parliament,” generating demands for constitutional reform.

Salvadoran society was also democratized at the base during the 1980s by the activities of non-electoral popular movements. Even in the face of great repression, the economic crisis, combined with the unresponsiveness of “normal” political channels, continually regenerated protest by organizations of workers, peasants, shantytown dwellers, returning refugees, students, women, and religious and human rights advocates. Some of these were F.M.L.N. supporters, but many were autonomous. Their strength and vitality have always varied greatly and cannot be taken for granted; in fact, their ability to function under new conditions will be a central determinant of how much can be won in future popular struggles.

§ *Land and social justice*: The F.M.L.N. has won the right to put its demands for redistribution of wealth on the national agenda—an important gain in this era of neoliberal “capitalist triumph” but by no means a promise of social revolution. The two major struggles are over land reform and the establishment of the “Foro,” a labor-business-government forum to debate and reach compromises on economic policy. Land became the first explosive issue. The accords stipulate that peasants in F.M.L.N.-controlled zones are to be given legal title to lands occupied during the war. Nationally, land reform provisions already in the Constitution (mandating redistribution of properties of more than 610 acres and those owned by the state) are to be enforced. In the first weeks of the cease-fire intense conflicts erupted between peasants who took the initiative to occupy land and soldiers trying to evict them. These tensions—in essence, over the sanctity of private property—have delayed implementation of the accords. The F.M.L.N. insists that illegal evictions be stopped and disputes resolved through the new Agrarian Commission. The leading private-sector association is blaming the F.M.L.N. for peasant land occupations and using this pretext to boycott the Foro. This open rebellion by the private sector reveals how minimally the propertied class accepted the accords.

Underlying the immediate struggles is a larger issue: Will reconstruction and “development” be formulated solely in terms of privatization and incorporation into the world market, with scant attention to the living standards of the population? Or will progressive forces be able to insist on sustainable development, oriented toward expanding the internal market and explicitly favoring the poor? All the social problems that gave rise to the war are now more acute. Landlessness rose from 15.6 percent of the rural population in the early 1960s to 65 percent in the 1980s. Over two-thirds of the population lives in extreme poverty, unable to afford a basic minimum diet. Government austerity policies are aggravating social inequities; now the government is insisting that it alone has authority over the economic reconstruction plan (accepting only “comments” from other sectors). But beyond this issue, and beyond

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the foreseeable difficulty of obtaining resources in an unfriendly international arena, the left will have to demonstrate that it can develop a long-range programmatic alternative to neoliberalism. Grass-roots and nongovernmental organizations as well as the F.M.L.N. have put forth many innovative ideas, but these have yet to be concretized in a cohesive national plan.

Will the accords be fully implemented, and will the process hold? Implementation, seriously delayed but not suspended, will most likely lurch forward, since renewal of the war is an ever less viable option. Nevertheless, there are constant reminders of the fragility of the process. Hard-line elements in the military, including most of the High Command, remain intent on derailing or rolling back the accords. They probably do not have the strength to attempt a last-ditch coup, but they have engaged in other highly provocative and destabilizing activities. Planes of "mysterious" origin have been flying over F.M.L.N. camps. There also remains a great danger of renewed death-squad operations, as seen in a series of recent assassinations. If these atrocities form a pattern and remain unpunished they will re-create a climate of fear. These rattlings of resistance on the right will doubtless intensify as the peace process advances, particularly when the purging of the armed forces begins.

If the sabotage continues and the peace deteriorates, what options will the F.M.L.N. have? It has taken great pains to show good faith—for example, turning over to Salvadoran courts two of its members responsible for killing U.S. advisers shot down in January 1991—but its leaders have also stated that they will not comply "unilaterally" with the peace accords. The entire process reached such a crisis point by late April, especially in light of the army's refusal to dissolve its security units and the delays in forming the civilian police, that the F.M.L.N. postponed its May 1 deadline for demobilizing 20 percent of its military forces. Simultaneously, F.M.L.N. leaders undertook an emergency mission to New York to seek a more forceful U.N. role, to gain release of badly needed funds and to urge other nations (including the United States)

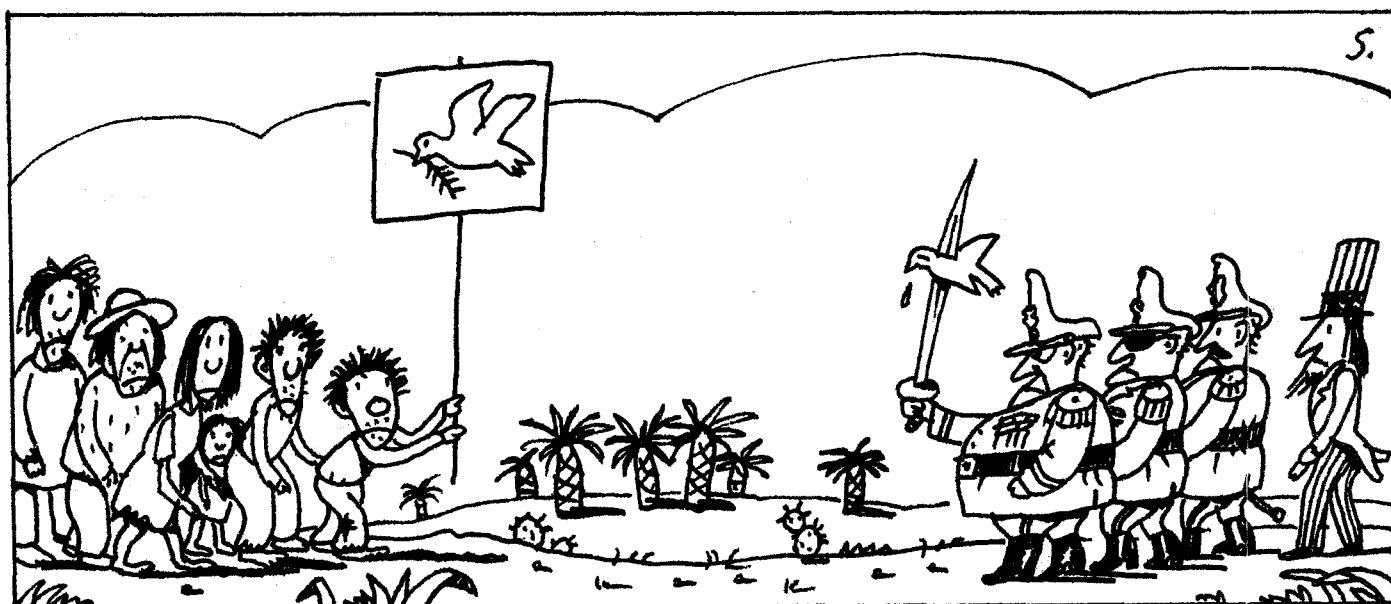
to pressure the Salvadoran government to comply with its commitments.

In order to maintain even the precarious balance that currently exists, then, all those forces that played a role in getting the accords signed will have to use their leverage again to assure compliance. The U.N. mission provides an important measure of stability and impartiality amid charges and countercharges—a task made infinitely more difficult by the right's campaign of threats and slanders against it.

But there are also destabilizing external players. The opponents of peace in El Salvador have an ally in the army of neighboring Guatemala, the hemisphere's most brutal human rights violator during that country's thirty-year civil war. If left intact, that army will doubtless be the strategic rear guard for Salvadoran hard-liners. The links are direct and material. Salvadoran death squads had their origin in Guatemala in the 1970s, and since then, rightists in the two countries have collaborated closely.

Furthermore, the Guatemalan Army sees itself directly concerned with events in El Salvador, as Gen. Hector Gramajo, then Guatemala's Defense Minister, told me explicitly in 1987. During the November 1989 F.M.L.N. offensive, it was widely reported that the Guatemalan Army had sent special forces and advisers to El Salvador. Two months later, Salvadoran social democratic leader Hector Oueli (a target of the Salvadoran right) was assassinated in Guatemala under circumstances that implicated the security forces [see George Black, "Terror Network," March 5, 1990]. Lasting peace in El Salvador will require a negotiated peace, demilitarization and democratization in Guatemala—a process that has begun but remains extremely tenuous.

And the United States? Even after acknowledging the need for negotiations in 1989, Washington obstructed the process during most of the past two years, attacking U.N. mediator Alvaro de Soto as pro-F.M.L.N. and encouraging the Salvadoran government to hold out for peace on its own terms. Only toward the end of 1991, and in the face of threats by Congressman Joe Moakley and others to stage a major battle over military aid, did Washington finally pressure President Al-



NATION REPRINTS

S&Ls, Big Banks and Other Triumphs of Capitalism

Robert Sherrill tells the sordid story of the looting decade. It's a feisty account that shows how the S&L crisis was created, how the taxpayers were betrayed by their elected officials and government regulators, who the chief scoundrels are and why the current bailout is a disaster. Most important, Sherrill warns that the Feds, in willful ignorance of the lessons of the S&L disaster, are moving rapidly toward further deregulation of the big banks—a move that could lead to even greater financial disaster. This issue's importance is intensified by today's headlines. (November 19, 1990)

The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today

Elinor Langer's well-researched and chilling look at the growth of skin-head, neo-Nazi and white supremacist hate groups with direct ideological links to the original Nazi movement. Langer concludes that something deeply disturbing is indeed happening here—something every American should comprehend and confront. (July 16/23, 1990)

How on Earth?—Strategies For a Habitable Planet

The Nation's special Earth Day 1990 issue features bold articles by Barry Commoner and Kirkpatrick Sale outlining down-to-earth technological and political strategies for preserving the planet. Commoner argues that government regulation has failed to persuade American corporations to clean up their act, and Sale argues that Earth Day 1990 commemorated the problem, not the solution. "To succeed," according to the issue's lead editorial, "environmental politics needs a movement." The solutions offered here are radical, but so is the problem. (April 30, 1990)

'Fetal Rights'—A New Assault on Feminism

Katha Pollitt focuses on the anti-choice forces' new strategy: persecuting women who carry or give birth to drug dependent or alcoholic children. Pollitt tells how mothers are being portrayed as "the major threat to unborn babies." Already in wide demand for college textbooks and academic courses in many disciplines. (March 26, 1990)

Scapegoating the Black Family

Guest-edited and written by African-American women, this important *Nation* issue debunks the myths and exposes the reality of the black family. Margaret B. Wilkerson, Jewell Handy Gresham, Faye Wattleton and others. With a final appeal/challenge to America by speaker, activist and author Ossie Davis. This issue has received widespread attention in academic circles and was nominated for a National Magazine Award. (July 24/31, 1989)

The Lords of the Global Village

Mergers and takeovers are transforming the information business, creating companies worth billions of dollars and concentrating power and ownership in the hands of a few. Ben H. Bagdikian, author of *The Media Monopoly*, examines the growth of these giant communication combines, and profiles such media barons as Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell. This special issue is essential to all students of the media, in or out of the classroom. (June 12, 1989)

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fredo Cristiani to make concessions and sign the accords. Since then, it has been silent on the Salvadoran government's violations and, by all indications, shares its vision of a future in which the army continues to play a central, if not hegemonic, role. Even with the cease-fire in effect, the Bush Administration is seeking \$65 million in 1992-93 military aid for the Salvadoran Army and had scheduled joint military maneuvers (which were canceled after widespread protest).

If Congress is to stop military aid and other counterproductive U.S. policies at this delicate turning point, constituent pressure will have to come from those who mobilized during the 1980s. Indeed, North Americans have compelling reasons to remain involved in the peace process in El Salvador and Guatemala. During the 1980s, an otherwise bleak period for progressives here, public concern over Central America created new movements and humanized U.S. politics in important ways. That concern awakened something that, for our own sake, we should nurture in the 1990s—above all, at a time of painful reminders that the needs and aspirations of many Americans are themselves in question. □

THE YOUNGEST HOMELESS

A Threnody for Street Kids

DAVID LEVI STRAUSS

One of my earliest childhood memories is of standing on the porch late at night, beating my forehead bloody against the white wooden siding of the house, cursing my drunken father within and repeating the words, "I will not be like him. I will not be like him." The mantra is as memorable as it was futile. Will aside, no child ever escapes his patrimony, though the desire to do so is fundamental and formative, countered always by the equally desperate desire to please one's parents and be worthy of their (withheld) love. Adolescence is the time when this conflict between differentiation and emulation erupts into schizophrenia and civil war. The need to belong and the need to establish an individual identity seem irreconcilable. Self-consciousness becomes a battleground. "Society" is a bad joke. No place like home.

Like the angel of forgetfulness who touches us at birth to make us forget so that we can be born (becoming is a secret process), there is another angel, I suspect, who touches us when we become adults, causing us to forget the abyss of adolescence. It is hard not to forget how difficult it was—much easier to idealize the state as a "simpler, less complicated" time, when we were "free of responsibilities."

In some strange way, our adult identity depends on this misremembering, so that when our own children remind us

David Levi Strauss is a writer, critic and editor who lives in San Francisco. This essay was originally written to accompany a photographic installation by artist Jim Goldberg.

of the struggle, we react defensively, even violently. We do not want to be reminded of that pain. Haven't we spent all our subsequent lives trying to overcome it? If we open ourselves up to the lives of our children, won't we also be opening our own old wounds?

In stark contrast to the image of "home" as inviolate sanctuary, which is still projected by American integration propaganda (advertising), "home" has increasingly become a site of violent conflict and abuse. Half of all homes are "broken" by divorce; many more are broken by spousal abuse. Child abuse in the home is a national epidemic. Poverty kills twenty-seven children every day in America. Ozzie and Harriet are dead and the Cosbys don't live around here.

Every year in the United States a million and a half kids run away from home. Many of them end up on city streets. Right now, today, there are some 30,000 kids living on the streets of New York City. Contrary to popular belief, most of them run away not because they want to but because they have to; because even the streets are safer than where they're running from, where many of them have been physically and sexually abused by their families. Even so, they are not running to anything but death. Nationwide, more than 5,000 children a year are buried in unmarked graves.

It's not the running away that is the problem. The truth is, kids can't run away. They can only run from one kind of abuse or neglect at home to another kind of abuse or exploitation by adults on the street. For most kids, it's a closed system. The only way out is death or oblivion. The cycle is nauseatingly consistent and far-reaching. Nine out of ten prison inmates were abused as children. Our current response to this is to build more prisons and call for the death penalty. Is it any wonder that the only thing runaway kids have left to aspire to is oblivion—that they may be able at least to orchestrate their own oblivion through "self-medication" or suicide?

Going over the statistics, listening to the case histories, it is difficult not to conclude that these thousands of kids are refugees from a war going on inside the American home and inside the American psyche. It begins to look like a kind of progenicide. Why are we at war with our own children? How did we get here? We seem to be as shell-shocked as they are, blinded by statistics and deafened by the enormity of the problem.

One of the secrets adults keep is that wars are always fought by children. Lied to all their lives by adults, kids lie to themselves and one another about the "freedom" and glamour of life on the streets. Friendly pimps offer sanctuary, security, even "love"—in exchange for the hard currency of the streets. The street economy is consistent with and reflective of the larger economy—it runs on greed from above and dreams from below. Kids run toward the ruined centers of the American Dream, like Hollywood and Times Square. Even while sleeping in Salvation Army storage boxes and squalid squats, they talk about someday making it big on stage or screen. They lie about how they prostitute themselves and they lie about their addictions. They pretend to revel in the pursuit of sex, drugs and rock and roll—only the sex consists of endless encounters with lonely old men panting to pay a little extra crystal to "ride bareback" (no condom); the drugs are crack

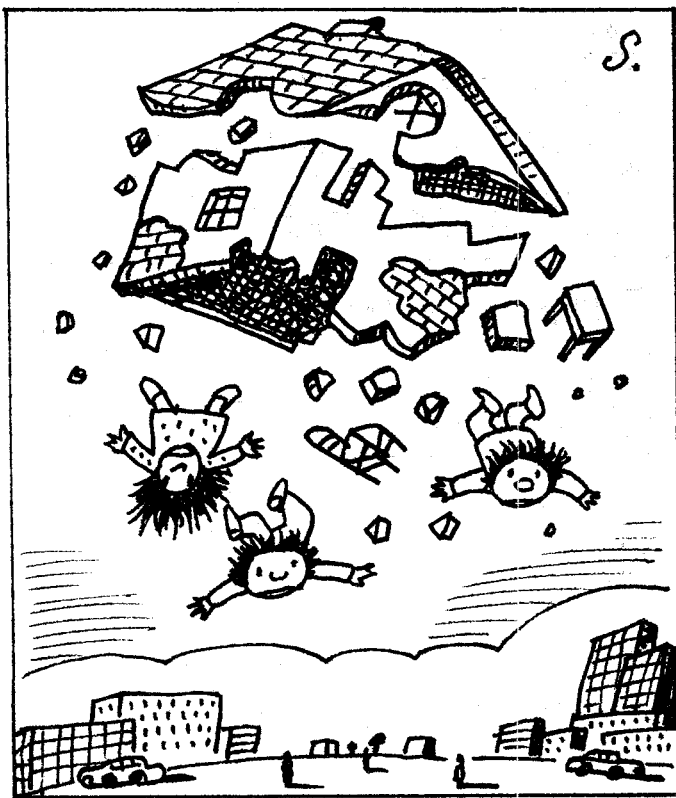
or unreliable street speed with dirty rigs and shared needles; and the rock and roll is Guns n' Roses on a tinny blaster in a dead-end alley.

Treated like pariahs by adults, kids cling to one another for comfort and acceptance. Abused by their fathers at home, they find new sugar daddies on the streets who'll *pay* to fuck them and who'll tell pretty lies about how much they're going to do for them. They try desperately to act like predators so maybe they won't look quite so much like prey. Look in their eyes. These are *children*.

As if the usual perils of living on the street—pimp violence, trick violence, gang violence, overdose and hunger—were not enough, now there is AIDS. A kid cannot last more than a month on the street without hustling. Among those hustling every night, boys and girls, the rate of exposure to AIDS is estimated at 50 percent. Adolescents are one of the fastest growing categories of people with new HIV infection.

So far, AIDS education hasn't worked on street kids. They have too little to lose and too tenuous a grasp of their own mortality. They are dying of AIDS for the same reason that they make such good soldiers in our wars. Already blamed for their appearance, their attitude, their sexual preference, their very existence, street kids are now also being blamed for the spread of AIDS.

When street kids are acknowledged at all (they are often dropped out of the equation of homelessness, even by social-service advocates), they are acknowledged as an irony, a festering sore on the backside of the American Dream. They are a living, breathing affront to the image of childhood that America likes to project. Images of bright, happy, uncomplicated children are at the center of much product advertising. The music and movie industries depend on the success of their sales of and to children.



At least since James Dean, the image of the sexy, alienated, autistic teenager has dominated the American psyche and has come to represent American culture around the world. Like the ancient Greeks, we are a *puer* culture that worships youth, as an ideal. But, as is often the case in Western culture, what we value and cherish as an ideal, we disregard or denigrate as reality. Just as teenagers have come to represent the desired complementary attributes of toughness and vulnerability, individuality and fierce loyalty, hipness and innocence in America's image of itself, real teenagers going through the real world-shattering transitions of puberty and adolescence are feared and despised.

Adults fear and hate kids because of the kids' relation to boundaries—the boundaries between childhood and adulthood, between innocence and experience, between “good” and “bad.” When kids “go bad,” they transgress the all-too-tenuous boundary separating “civilized behavior” from barbarism. Roving gangs of wilding youths make good news copy because they reify our fears and justify our enmity. Fear is one of the two main obstacles to dealing with the real problems of street kids. The other is empathic overload.

For those of us who are not insulated from the streets by wealth or privilege, the human misery we see out there every day can add up to an almost unbearable weight. To go on with our lives, it often seems necessary to let some of it slip. The phenomenon is not new. Melville described it in the New York of 140 years ago, in “Bartleby the Scrivener,” his “story of Wall Street”:

So true it is, and so terrible, too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it.

Surely we have not gotten to that point of hopelessness with our own children? These are not someone else's kids. Like it or not, we are related, and they are becoming more like us every day—frightened, numbed, wounded. If we continue to shut them out and then ignore the nightly beating on the walls, who are the barbarians? These kids are not asking for much. They just want to come home. □

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EDITORIALS.

(Continued From Page 737)

inconsistent wrestler. (There are usually two or three active *yokozuna*; the only remaining one has just retired.)

The controversy surrounding Konishiki has now become a lightning rod for those who criticize Japan for being a closed society and also for those xenophobic Japanese who lament that their society has become too open. Konishiki claimed in an interview with *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* that he is not being promoted because he is not Japanese. Indeed, a few surly members of the Yokozuna Council have stated publicly that they would never allow a foreign *yokozuna*.

The *New York Times* reported on April 22 that Konishiki reiterated this position in a telephone interview, after *Nihon Keizai* ran its story. Curiously, only when Konishiki's comments hit the foreign press did the Japan Sumo Association, the governing body of the sport, lunge into action. On April 23, Konishiki attended a meeting with the association's chairman, Dawanoumi, and denied there was racial discrimination and tearfully apologized for the incident. On April 24, the *Times* ran a story in which Konishiki claimed that its reporter had never spoken to him—that a person at Konishiki's *takasago beya* (stable) who identified himself as Konishiki took the reporter's call and answered the reporter's questions. Having spent some time in a sumo *beya*, I find this version, presented by the Japan Sumo Association, highly suspect. Sumo is a strictly hierarchical world in which every *rikishi* (sumoist) is acutely conscious of who occupies what rung and in which a higher-ranked wrestler has free rein to smack around lower-ranked ones. The claim that a lower-ranked wrestler would impersonate a top *ozeki* like Konishiki is very hard to believe. At any rate, *Nihon Keizai* stood by its story. Whichever version is true, the point is that once the *Times* picked up the story, Konishiki's status became an international issue, on a par with opening rice markets or semiconductor dumping for heightening U.S.-Japan tensions.

The Yokozuna Council and the Japan Sumo Association are extreme examples of secretive Japanese organizations. Their members appear in public in black robes, do most of their deliberating in private and even speak an archaic form of Japanese. Are they racist? Probably. Most groups protecting the “traditional values” of a sport are.

Konishiki, a quiet, 576-pound performer who until recently has seemed immune to veiled racist taunts or public discussion of whether a foreigner should be allowed to hold the exalted rank of *yokozuna*, is perhaps uniquely suited to cross the *yokozuna* “color barrier.” At any rate, if he wins the upcoming Nagoya Tournament, not even the Emperor will be able to stop the tidal wave of popular opinion favoring his promotion. Konishiki is loved by most younger Japanese and may be Japan's most recognizable celebrity.

Konishiki recently picked up Japanese citizenship forms.

KARL TARO GREENFELD

Karl Taro Greenfeld writes from Tokyo for The Nation.

BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Bonfire This Time

GERALD HOWARD

CLOCKERS. By Richard Price. Houghton Mifflin. 599 pp. \$22.95.

In the spring of 1989, as *The Bonfire of the Vanities* was going into its umpteenth printing, I heard Ishmael Reed amusingly cut Tom Wolfe down to size while addressing a very white-bread audience at a writers' conference in Birmingham, Alabama. Riffing in his customary Muhammad Ali fashion, Reed allowed as to how Wolfe was a very talented "corporate novelist," but, he wondered rhetorically, "Why is it that when Mister Wolfe comes visiting our neighborhoods, the only thing he seems to notice about us is *our sneakers?*"

Inevitably *Clockers*, Richard Price's big, nervy, enormously risky new novel of urban decay, is going to be compared to Tom Wolfe's big, nervy, etc. In my opinion, not only can *Clockers* stand up to the comparison, it should emerge with what you might call a moral victory. For whatever imperfections mar *Clockers*—and it is not a perfect novel—Price most emphatically does not have a sneaker problem. As a white novelist dealing with black characters—hell, as a novelist dealing with characters—he has leapfrogged well beyond Wolfe's sartorial fetishism and status-mongering to penetrate deep into the fear-riven souls of his black "clockers" (street slang for low-level cocaine dealers) and the white cops who are saddled with the hopeless task of policing them. Beyond that, *Clockers* offers the thrilling (and all too rare) spectacle of a gifted novelist hitting his sweet spot in literary time, when his gifts, his ambitions and his chosen subject matter mesh with sublime synchronicity.

We have not heard from Richard Price the novelist in far too long. He burst on the scene in 1974 as a 24-year-old *Wunderkind* with *The Wanderers*, a streetsmart doo-wop *Bildungsroman* about a Bronx gang in the early sixties. The book rocked with the profane energy of a crowded New York schoolyard and caught the tail end of the juvenile delinquent era with an almost elegiac touch. It was followed by *Blood Brothers* (1976), a Scorsese-like

saga of a rough-and-tumble Italian family in Co-op City; *Ladies' Man* (1979), a scary descent into the loneliness and sleaze of the sex-for-sale world; and *The Breaks* (1983), an autobiographically tinged coming-of-age novel about a spiritually confused graduate of a prestigious upstate college who finds himself as a stand-up comedian. These books had in common a style of suppressed hysteria that could erupt at any moment, in any direction—into shocking violence or hilarious spritzes à la Lenny Bruce or Mel Brooks. They were intensely, hormonally male books, and intensely New York in feeling. When Price was on, you could experience the sort of giddiness New Yorkers of a certain age will recall from a good run of rock and roll songs on WABC-AM. (At this point the reviewer must declare his interest: I reprinted all four of Price's early novels in paperback when I was an editor at Penguin Books in the mid-eighties.)

*In this ugly time,
Price's choice of
subject and his bold
sympathy have true
social import.*

And then the novels stopped, possibly because of diminishing commercial returns. Price retooled himself as a screenwriter, an altogether more remunerative pursuit than novel writing, and hooked up, perhaps inevitably, with Martin Scorsese to script *The Color of Money* and the best-regarded segment of *New York Stories*. His screenplay for *Sea of Love* was also made into a financially successful film, and Price's, well, price skyrocketed for movie work. Price-scripted or Price-derived films always have energy and powerful dialogue, but to this observer directors invariably literalize (and hence overdo) the effects inherent (and hence best experienced) in his wired urban language. And no one has ever quite translated his unique humor to the screen intact. But Hollywood money talks, and

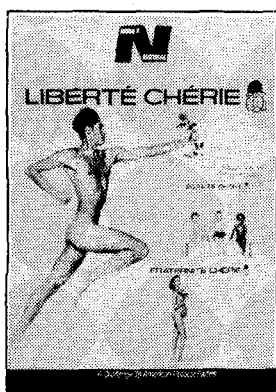
so the cult fans of Richard Price's fiction gradually resigned themselves to his absence from the novel as his screenwriting fame grew.

So it was news of some moment on the literary tribal drum when word leaked that Price was spending evenings in Jersey City with a TNT flying squad on narcotics patrol, doing research for a new novel. *Clockers* is the result, produced in surprisingly short order for a 599-page book. To say that it is by far Richard Price's best book does not really do justice to the great strides he has made in handling a large cast of characters and complex plot material, or to the tremendous leaps he has attempted in entering the frighteningly alien terrain of street-level drug trade and crossing the color barrier into the world of the black inner city. To this reader Price has cleared the bar with plenty of room to spare on both jumps, and that is also part of the thrill of this book.

Not that the social landscape in which *Clockers* takes place is anything other than sorely dispiriting. The first chapter virtually beams the reader down without preamble or trail map into the midst of an average day's cocaine business in a playground in the Roosevelt Houses projects in Dempsy (transparently Jersey City), just across the Hudson from New York. You struggle with disorientation as street nicknames whiz by—Peanut, Futon, The Word, Andre the Giant, Thumper—and the everyday legal and business intricacies of bottle traffic are transacted with brisk efficiency and minimal exposition. Price risks losing some of his readers right here, but as with *A Clockwork Orange*, the swift shock to expectations is bracing—you *know* you're not in Kansas anymore—and the alien language gradually becomes intelligible. "Knockos" is the street pronunciation of "narcos," "the Fury" is shorthand for drug squads who tool around in standard-issue Plymouth Furies, and so on.

Price presents two main antagonists, whose dual points of view encompass all the action of this long novel. The first is Strike, a 19-year-old mid-level dealer who presides over his own crew of clockers in the Roosevelt Houses. A character who might ordinarily be portrayed as a frightening or pathetic figure by a white novelist—a Tom Wolfe, let's say—is rendered by Price entirely from the inside as a young man driven by fear, insecurity and the urgent need to exert as much control

Gerald Howard is an editor in the trade department of W.W. Norton.



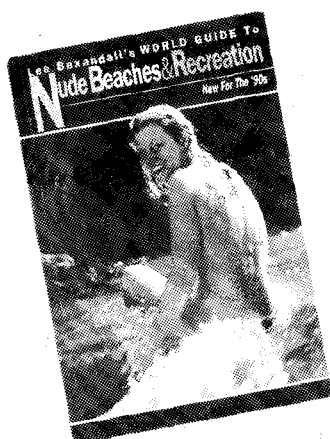
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as possible amid the chaos and constant mortal danger that surround him. He and his crew are utterly abstinent from the drug they hawk and have nothing but contempt for the local pipeheads and white suburban kids to whom they sell. Strike himself stutters in times of stress (of which there are plenty) and constantly chugs warm Yoo-Hoo to soothe his premature ulcer. He has been tapped by the local drug boss, Rodney, for bigger, scarier jobs in his ever-shifting organization—something Strike finds a profoundly mixed blessing. Rodney, one of *Clockers'* best-realized characters, is a sort of ghetto version of Milo Minderbinder, juggling twenty schemes and scams at once and given to running fatuous, hypocritical lines on the need to save money and plan ahead. Rodney has discovered that another one of his protégés, Darryl Adams, is selling someone else's dope out of Ahab's, the greasy fish joint where he works. Darryl, Rodney tells Strike, has "got to get got." Once he's "got," Strike can move into his lucrative spot moving ounces rather than bottles.

One night Darryl Adams is indeed shot outside Ahab's, and the task of finding the killer falls to Rocco Klein, a white homicide detective one year short of retirement and soul-sick of his job. A conviction is seemingly handed to him on a silver platter when Victor, Strike's straight-arrow brother, gives himself up to a minister and confesses to the shooting "in self-defense." But Klein won't buy this, because the circumstances argue against self-defense and Victor seems too straight for murder. He works full time as the assistant manager of another fast-food joint, moonlights as a security guard in New York, is married with two children—in short, he is one of the Roosevelt Houses' infrequent "success stories." Klein decides that Victor is taking the fall to protect his brother Strike, and his quest to break down both their stories turns him into an inverted Javert, driven by a desire to save a life from a thirty-year prison term and to redeem his own two grim decades on the force.

Price, then, has borrowed the form and the considerable motive power of the classic police procedural to drive this long, complex, crowded book. (I also suspect that Warren Miller's 1959 novel *The Cool World* provided some stylistic clues in dealing with black language.) The standard clichés about Hollywood's dire influence on the novelist must be reversed in this instance, because Price has clearly learned a great deal about the

control of narrative from his screenwriting work—it is by far the most securely plotted of his novels. Page by page, he draws the net of circumstances tighter about Strike with superb control, and the reader's knowledge of both Strike's innocence and his anguish over his brother's plight holds at bay any harsh judgment of his complicity in a drug plague. As *Clockers* proceeds, one gradually comes to understand the attractions and the near-inevitability of the drug business, given the almost complete absence of any other exits, any alternatives, any hope.

Which brings us back to Tom Wolfe and *Bonfire*. In the wake of that novel's incredible success, Wolfe characteristically rubbed it in with an essay in the November 1989 *Harper's* titled "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel." Essentially a continuation of the argument Wolfe had first made in his introduction to the 1973 anthology *The New Journalism*, it decried the death of the novel of social realism à la Balzac, Zola and Sinclair Lewis, and the concomitant habits of exhaustive research that yielded those writers' material. He predicted "that the future of the fictional novel would be in a highly detailed realism based on reporting, a realism more thorough than anything currently being attempted, a realism that would portray the individual in intimate and inextricable relation to the society around him." For all his willed philistine ignorance of the varieties of literary art and experience, Wolfe had many valid points. He also had his own answer to hand, of course, in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*—a book one could call the novel of the decade without necessarily meaning it as a compliment.

I would suggest that *Clockers* brilliantly fits Wolfe's bill: The vividness and authority of Price's descriptions of holding cells, cop bars, project stairwells; his deep knowledge of the nomenclature, economics and dangerous hierarchies and trading practices of the drug business; the rough dynamics and abrasive intimacies of the cops' relations with their ghetto clients and adversaries and their terminally cynical views on criminal justice—all this and so much more in *Clockers* serves as the unmistakable evidence of months of surely unpleasant firsthand observation.

An entire world takes shape in this novel, with distinct parochial values and folkways and a violent but internally logical canon of behavior. Price populates Dempsy with a large and varied cast of subsidiary characters, all portrayed in

swift, convincing strokes. What impresses the longtime reader of his work is the maturing of novelistic tone in *Clockers* in comparison with his earlier novels, which have something of the flashy stand-up routine about them. Here Price's gaze is level and unflinching, and the flashes of humor are put in the service of an essentially angry vision of human waste and corruption. The resulting book has some of the visceral kick of a reality-TV cop show, but it forgoes the queasy voyeurism in which those shows traffick.

So much of what comes through on Price's radar—the tragic as well as the deeply human—eluded Wolfe's highly touted surveillance instruments. Wolfe plays our urban social disasters for high entertainment, and we eagerly consent. Only later does it sink in that there were no *people* in those stunning social tableaux, only targets. In *Clockers*, Price exhibits all the research Wolfe could possibly require, but he has one more indispensable quality Wolfe still lacks as a social novelist and may never have: a heart.

Clockers does have its *longueurs* and local failures. Rocco Klein's marriage to a well-to-do young woman in SoHo is the weakest, least credible part of the book; Price has always had problems with his women characters. And having Klein's crisis of conscience triggered by a visiting movie star who is tagging along on the cops' rounds for "atmosphere" seems like a device for alleviating Price's own uneasiness about being accused of exploiting the people who gave him entree to their world. His monologues still sometimes turn into performances, and occasionally there are so many levels of narrative that the novelist seems mired in the fearsome complications he's devised for his protagonists.

But these are quibbles. On balance *Clockers* brilliantly revives a strain of American social fiction that runs from Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* to Wright's *Native Son* and James T. Farrell's Studs Lonigan trilogy. In this ugly time, when the white middle class and the black urban poor seem to be inexorably drifting apart, Price's selection of subject matter and his bold acts of novelistic sympathy and penetration have true social import. It would be a terrible thing if Price gets picked on by black critics for leaving his own racial turf. It is indeed long past time for America's novelists to get off the campuses and out of the fashionable neighborhoods and turn their powers of observation and mimesis to the

fraying American reality. Such powerful recent books as Jimmy Breslin's *Table Money*, Russell Banks's *Continental Drift*, John Edgar Wideman's *Philadelphia Fire*, Joel Rose's *Kill the Poor* and John Sayles's unjustly overlooked *Los Gusanos* prove that fiction can still be a vital agency of social witness and documentation—and a goad to our collective conscience. The fact that the latter four novels and *Clockers* were all written by members

of the baby boom generation gives the lie to the suspicion that this cohort is by birthright and training terminally self-involved. In this context, then, one is finally moved to assert that not only does Richard Price deserve every success with *Clockers* but that such success is badly needed as a counterexample for younger American writers in search of reasons to write and things to write about. Here's hoping. □

How Now, Brown?

DAVID L. KIRP

THE HOLLOW HOPE: Can Courts Bring About Social Change? By Gerald Rosenberg. University of Chicago. 425 pp. \$29.95.

When veterans of the civil rights litigation wars gather, they tell heroic tales of bygone days—stories with the lawyer invariably cast as David, felling politically powerful Goliaths with the weapons of law and logic. In this storytelling, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the desegregation of America's public schools—typically rhapsodized as nothing less than "the most important political, social, and legal event in America's twentieth-century history"—hold primacy of place. Close behind come accounts of the reapportionment cases, which are said to have given political voice to the voiceless; the abortion cases, which one ebullient commentator described as the greatest victory "for women's rights since enactment of the 19th Amendment"; and a series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s and 1970s supposedly heralding a revolution in criminal rights and environmental protection.

The legal activists' ancient antagonists—assembled under the banner of neutral principles or, latterly, strict construction—read these same decisions very differently. While the desegregation cases and the reapportionment cases now command grudging acceptance even among these judicial passivists, there is only animosity toward *Miranda* and the other

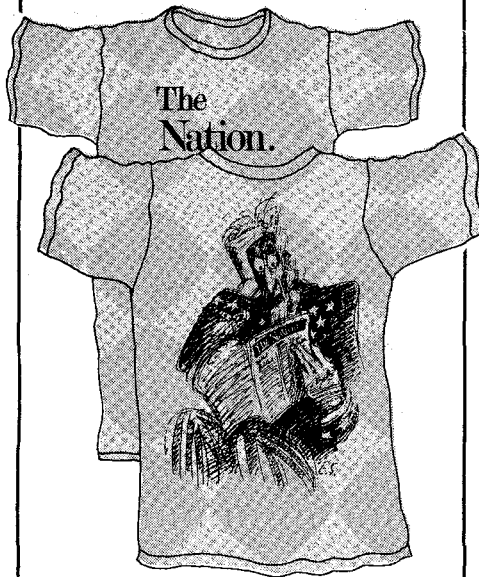
criminal law rulings meant to apply Marquess of Queensberry rules in the lineups and holding tanks; and especially toward the abortion cases, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, those "most radical decisions ever issued." On those black Mondays, conservatives claim, unprincipled Justices promoted a progressive social agenda at the expense of the rule of law, doing untold harm to society.

This controversy is as ancient and stylized as a passion play. But both sides agree that, whether for good or evil, the Supreme Court has been a powerful force in the tide of human affairs. It is precisely this point that Gerald Rosenberg—lawyer, political scientist and self-confessed liberal empiricist who teaches at the University of Chicago—means to debunk. He argues with considerable subtlety and power, and no little persuasiveness, that the promise of Supreme Court action has been chimerical. In his view, the Justices are, at best, the Rosencrantzes and Guildensterns of the larger American social drama, and the lawyers pleading their cases have mostly been wasting their thespian talents.

From social history to autobiography: My own life as a lawyer starting out in the heady days of the late 1960s took the real and beneficent force of judge-made reform as a given. The Harvard Center for Law and Education, with which I was associated in the years after graduating from law school, relied on courts in advancing its equitarian agenda. Working with local attorneys, its lawyers rewrote the script for handicapped children, who until then had been routinely "excused"—less politely, excluded—from public education. It brought lawsuits challenging the practice, prevalent in the Southwest, of requiring Hispanic schoolchildren to speak only English, even on the playground, on penalty of expulsion. In courtrooms across the

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country, the center blew the whistle on school districts that spent federal dollars meant for poor kids on carpeting administrators' offices. It took on seemingly everyone: from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, for dosing Indian children with Thorazine; to the Boston schools, for running a Jim Crow operation well into the eighth decade of the twentieth century. In 1970, when attorneys representing the Nixon Administration stood up in a Maine courtroom to denounce the center as "the Cambridge conspiracy," we celebrated with champagne in plastic cups.

To our generation of legal activists, whether our attention was focused on sex discrimination or welfare rights, abortion or exclusionary zoning, *Brown v. Board of Education* was the cornerstone of a new social order. But it is Rosenberg's contention that this reinvention of the Republic not only did not, but structurally could not, come about in court. *The Hollow Hope* takes special aim at *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade* because they are central to the myth; less attention is paid to reapportionment, environmentalism and criminal law. While the discussion of judicial activism typically centers on the legitimacy of what courts do, Rosenberg focuses on its efficacy. And in a discourse in which argument is usually rhetorical—for what weapons other than language do lawyers own?—Rosenberg is an empiricist. If judicial decisions have the impact claimed for them, he contends, these effects should be traceable and demonstrable. Already lawyer-readers are probably reaching for their holsters. But what distinguishes this venture from other efforts that mean to debunk the law is the breadth and sophistication of the undertaking. While numbers have a place in the analysis, they are kept in their place.

Rosenberg makes the telling if familiar point that ten years after the *Brown* decision, barely 2 percent of black children in the South attended school with whites; and that only with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the incentive of federal dollars did sizable numbers of Dixie school districts desegregate. But that is the beginning, not the end, of the inquiry. More surprising is the paucity of evidence that *Brown* had even the indirect effects normally posited for it. Politicians weren't emboldened by the decree: President Eisenhower could barely conceal his hostility; President Kennedy wanted nothing to do with integration; and in 1964, when Congress debated the Civil Rights Act, it gave *Brown* barely a men-

tion. The press paid only modest attention to the case. Outside the N.A.A.C.P., blacks were mostly uninspired by the ruling; most civil rights organizations did not use the decision to expand their base of support; and white attitudes, far from becoming more tolerant of black aspirations, seemed to harden into resistance.

It's easy enough for social scientists to "prove" that nothing has any effect upon anything else—just consult the literature on the impact of schooling on achievement or the deterrent impact of capital punishment—but Rosenberg doesn't just show what didn't happen. Pretty convincingly, he locates the main impetus for civil rights in the freedom rides and sit-ins, powerful moral gestures that revealed the brutal face of the establishment white South. These were not just post-*Brown* phenomena; the first freedom ride was conducted in 1947. They were tied to deeper changes in the national landscape, including the increasing economic costs of maintaining segregation; the realization that segregation was being used in the cold war as a weapon against the United States; the improving economic situation of blacks; and partisan G.O.P. efforts to woo black voters, beginning with the 1956 elections, by softening the party's image on race.

The 1954 decision made law school look like a noble calling.

Rosenberg sticks his neck out even further, contending that even had *Brown* upheld separate but equal, integration would have come about anyway. That's going too far; and the claim suggests a deeper weakness in his approach. What Rosenberg the empiricist cannot sense is the extent to which the unanimous ruling in *Brown*—and four years later, the opinion in the Little Rock case, signed individually by the Justices, condemning officially sanctioned violence against a handful of black teenagers whose sin was to enroll in Central High—gave a powerful symbolic endorsement to those seeking integration, while putting apologists for segregation on the defensive. These legal judgments, both moral and constitutional in tone, forced Southern segregationists to craft arguments as convoluted and

unconvincing as those made by slavery's defenders a century earlier.

Nor does Rosenberg appreciate the abiding impression that the possibility of constitutional justice embodied in *Brown* made on a generation of law students and their teachers. For those coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s, the segregation cases had a significance akin to the impress of the New Deal on the preceding generation. The 1954 decision shaped the conception of law in ways not measurable with even the finest calipers. It made law school (in contrast to business school) look like a noble calling, and so influenced both the numbers and the caliber of those who went there. These students were instructed by professors who mostly took *Brown* as a given. If this faith in *Brown*, and more broadly in the claims of a law that served the public interest, was substantially mythic, it acquired a life of its own through repetition in the cathedrals of legal learning—and this too is part of the story of law and social change.

When writing about abortion and reapportionment, Rosenberg takes a different and more disingenuous approach. He does not argue that *Roe v. Wade* and *Baker v. Carr* were toothless rulings—it would be hard to read the statistics on abortion or the composition of state legislatures and come to that conclusion—but instead that the rulings accomplished far less than the hoped-for nirvanas of real women's choice or deep political change.

For nearly a decade before *Roe* was decided, abortion had been on the nation's political agenda, and eighteen states had liberalized their laws. The number of abortions had risen rapidly—from 22,700 in 1969 to 586,800 in 1972, the year before *Roe* was decided—even as polls showed that a majority of Americans had come to accept the rightness of leaving the abortion decision with the woman.

But Rosenberg is on shaky ground in contending that this liberalization would have continued unabated without a Supreme Court ruling—and that the right-to-life movement would not have been galvanized if proponents of abortion had proceeded through the slower channels of politics. The winds of liberalization did not reach all regions of the country, and, politically, they stopped well short of leaving decisions about the fate of a fetus in the hands of the mother; for that, a judicial decree or federal law was needed. In the absence of a judicial ruling, proponents of choice might not have fallen into a deep and fateful sleep, as they did after *Roe v. Wade*, but would instead

have sustained a campaign of persuasion. It is wishful thinking, though, to imagine that, had they simply stayed out of court, abortion proponents could have slipped the issue by the right-to-life contingent for much longer. As Kristin Luker shows in *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (and as recent TV reports about the goings-on in Buffalo confirm), pro-life and pro-choice forces don't merely stand across a conventional political divide. They inhabit entirely unreconcilable moral universes.

Rosenberg's analysis of *Baker v. Carr* and its progeny points out that while state legislature and Congressional districts were indeed reapportioned to correspond to the rule of one person, one vote—precisely what the Supreme Court mandated—little substantive reform followed. The faces of the legislators changed, and so did the districts they represented, but the political agenda remained pretty much the same. Malapportioned districts, it turned out, didn't explain all the evils of American politics, something that surprised only the lawyers. While a procedural victory was won, and voters were in an abstract sense more equal, new procedures gave way to old politics. As the lines on the playing field were redrawn, crafty players could find new points of advantage. Here, unlike *Brown*, the law's implementation could be traced, but to what end?

Faith in the saving power of law remains largely intact on the litigious left, but the idea of a courtroom revolution has given way to guerrilla tactics. More and more, energies are focused on keeping cases out of the federal courts. What passes for a success story is the evil that didn't come to pass, most notably Robert Bork's ascendancy to the Supreme Court (a Pyrrhic victory if ever there was one). The tangible wins are small, like the Supreme Court's recent vindication, by a 5-to-4 vote, of a Nebraska farmer's right not to be enticed by the feds into purchasing a single piece of kiddie porn. Or else they are fleeting, like the judicial determination, swiftly and curtly dismissed by the Justices, that execution by gas chamber is cruel and unusual punishment.

If Gerald Rosenberg had his way, would-be lawyers would perform a more useful service running for those open seats in Congress or signing on with Ralph Nader or launching their own version of a progressive company like Ben & Jerry's. Indeed, they would be better off doing almost anything than marching into the sunset, ties Windsor-knotted and briefs in hand, to file their motions in the name of justice. □

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Loving You

ERIC LOTT

DEAD ELVIS: A Chronicle of a Cultural Obsession. By Greil Marcus. Doubleday. 233 pp. \$25.

When Elvis Presley died bloated and claustrophobic in August 1977, something unexpected happened—he came to life. Almost overnight, it seemed, Elvis was everywhere, the ineludible inhabitant of tabloid fantasy, cartoon odyssey and punk-rock parody. Like a con man in a coat of many colors, Elvis returned as smooth-talker and sexpot, idiot and judge. In the Virginia town where I live, the Blue Moon Diner in rakish homage features a living-color bust of Elvis on the lunch counter; stranger creatures—Elvis Christ, Elvis Nixon, Elvis Hitler, Elvis Mishima—have peopled the alleyways of recent American cultural fantasy. *Dead Elvis* is Greil Marcus's attempt to chronicle this baffling obsession with the King.

In drawing up a register of Elvis emanations, half-sightings, misconstruals and nonappearances, Marcus, author of the classic *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* (Dutton) and of *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Harvard), has taken on the role of both interpreter and medium. The lavishly illustrated *Dead Elvis* reprints some of Marcus's attempts since the 1970s to account for the currency of Elvis, and calls up his ghost in the process. The shade of Elvis Presley, Marcus writes, is "now an anarchy of possibilities, a strain of freedom less clear, but no less suggestive, than the man ever was." Beginning with Elvis "pre-dead" (as Marcus calls him) and moving through his disorienting absence and liberating return, *Dead Elvis* documents what he has been up to for the past fifteen years. "Elvis Presley made history; this is a book about how, when he died, many people found themselves caught up in the adventure of remaking his history, which is to say their own."

Marcus has devoted much of his writing to showing just how Elvis Presley made history. The "Elvis: Presliad"

Eric Lott teaches English at the University of Virginia. His book *Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

chapter in *Mystery Train* (written before Presley's death) is one of the most compelling and incisive accounts of an American cultural figure we have. The best parts of *Dead Elvis* cast a backward glance from a similar perspective. For Marcus, Presley is nothing less than American culture's "perfect, all-inclusive metaphor for itself," a parable of roots, race and commerce. His subject's Southern white working-class origins, Marcus asserts, encourage too many to dismiss the significance of his music. In a shattering review of Albert Goldman's scurrilous biography *Elvis* (1981), Marcus exposes the classist canard that self-conscious culture isn't created among the lower orders. He illuminates, too, the contradictions of a figure who, when he made his entrance onto the airwaves in the mid-1950s, seemed too bluesy for white radio deejays and too country for black ones. No "folk" figure with merely local commitments but a country bohemian with his eye on the main chance, Elvis, in Marcus's view, was not undone but enriched by his encounter with the mainstream he in turn revolutionized.

*'Straight up racist
that sucker was,
Simple and plain,'
Public Enemy raps
about Elvis.*

Presley's early death freed him from the snares of fame, boredom and delusion, not least in the minds of his fans. No longer an oppressive figure of showbiz banality, Presley was submitted to a vast, waggish, common conversation, floating free of any narrator or authoritative voice: "more than anything cultural noise, the glossolalia of money, advertisements, tabloid headlines, bestsellers, urban legends, nightclub japes." Listeners of a morning radio call-in show in San Francisco, "Breakfast With Elvis," plan glutton-Elvis's daily meal (linguine sprinkled with crushed Alka-Seltzer, waffles with a spread of Vaseline, a hound dog's puppy chow). Billy Joe Burnette records a tribute song, "Welcome Home Elvis," sung from the point of view of El-

vis's stillborn twin. Art projects link Elvis and Jesus, a major subtheme of Marcus's book (both are worshipped, "very passionate" and vulnerable, one artist remarks). Innumerable Elvis impersonators appear—200 of them at the Statue of Liberty during the United States Constitution bicentennial celebration [see my review of *I Am Elvis: A Guide to Elvis Impersonators*, July 8, 1991]. And now, as a friend of mine remarked, the vote in the Post Office's contest between early and late Elvis stamps has taken on greater interest—and probably more moral significance—than the Democratic primaries. If spoiler Elvis's electoral redoubt is any indication, this won't be the last we'll hear from him.

Much of the pleasure of *Dead Elvis* is in the bemusing mix of affection, revenge and wit with which people have adorned Elvis's afterlife. Marcus remains the cultural gnostic of his *Lipstick Traces*, taking note of the secret connections, faint echoes, casual fables and unbidden, often unheard melodies that constitute the ongoing conversation about Elvis. The evidence Marcus has gathered suggests that Presley's posthumous appeal has to do with our ferocious ambivalence toward him, a blend of worship and revulsion, obeisance and revolutionary desire. Sympathetically despising what Presley became, everyone is now in on—not the joke, but the remaking of their world. Marcus remarks that death made Elvis human again, brought him back to walk among us. It is no less true that playing with Elvis's image carries a political charge, especially for working-class fans—a momentary assertion of autonomy, a rallying around a cultural herald, a reclamation of something "they" have taken from "us."

Dead Elvis closely follows the history of this engagement with Elvis, from halting early pieces that mime the nullity Elvis had become by the mid-1970s, to powerful summary statements that clinch Marcus's influential vision of Elvis's career, to curiously disabled efforts at capturing meanings that, as Marcus avers, have spun completely out of control. Maybe so, but the pastiches of quotation and collages of imagery that form the central meaning-making attempts of the book's final sections left me feeling as though the interpreter had left the medium in charge—an abdication of effort rather than a surplus of Elvis. This technique, it seems to me, also conveys the impression that Elvis's contemporary resonance lies chiefly in the avant-garde

realm of obscure record sleeves and Situationist slogans; the book too seldom strays into the provinces of beauty parlor and truck stop.

The least convincing aspect of *Dead Elvis*, however, lies in the vision of America it projects. Despite its later sections' postmodern techniques, the book settles for an oddly straitened view of American culture. Anyone who thinks Elvis, the white Negro, can represent all of America has some explaining to do. For too many, Elvis has been mistakenly coronated. Ask black people what they think of him, as V.S. Naipaul did in *A Turn in the South* (1989), and you may hear: "To talk to Presley about blacks was like talking to Adolf Hitler about the Jews. You know what he said? 'All I want from blacks is for them to buy my records and shine my shoes.' That's in the record." No matter that Presley said other things at other times, or that his music speaks a very different language from those words. On Marcus's own terms—the meanings that currently circulate around Elvis—much of the population, rightly or not, finds Elvis wanting. ("Straight up racist that sucker was, /Simple and plain," raps Public Enemy.)

Marcus knows this, and yet to take Elvis as the very meaning of America is to limit its field and purview. The racial contradictions Elvis opened up have closed around him again; the largely celebratory mode of Marcus's work may only close them further. The author passes too quickly over his suggestion that Howlin' Wolf or Emily Dickinson might equally serve as metaphors for America. It may be that Marcus is merely following the culture in pursuing Dead Elvis rather than Dead Wolf or Dead Emily, but for me there is too little attention to the real limits as well as the merits of Elvis as an American exemplar.

Dead Elvis provides plenty of evidence that the conscious creations of Elvis Presley are nevertheless some of the most extraordinary pieces of wit and wisdom America has yet contributed, as Emerson said of Whitman, one of Elvis's precursors. Marcus has almost single-handedly elucidated this and other crucial cultural facts, finding small dramas of destiny in places most people have been too timid to look. *Dead Elvis* at its best does full justice to the mysteries and miseries of American culture. So grand is dead Elvis's con, however, that Marcus himself may have been hoodwinked into overstating the case. □

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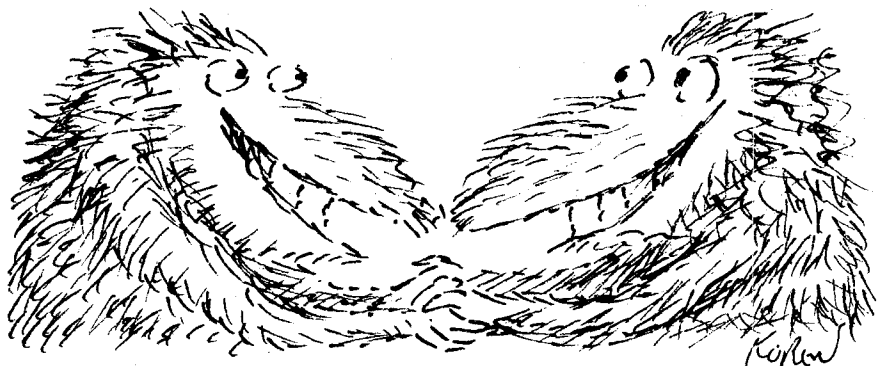
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MUSIC.

GENE SANTORO

In the Forbidden Zone

An invitation to attend the Havana Jazz Festival this year roused my curiosity. Afro-Cuban jazz, after all, has been a vibrant part of the American mainstream since Dizzy Gillespie hired famed Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo in the late 1940s. Added bait: This year's edition was programmed by Cuban piano whiz Gonzalo Rubalcaba.

Rubalcaba was only a rumor to me until early last year, when I was sent an advance cassette of *Discovery* (Blue Note), recorded live at the 1990 Montreux Jazz Festival. Backed by bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian, the then-28-year-old pianist was a revelation on "All the Things You Are" and Monk's "Well You Needn't" as well as on originals by the trio's members. His Romantic lyricism coexisted with daredevil improvisational acrobatics. His phrasing routinely stretched time and harmony almost beyond their breaking points, curling them back against themselves like a musical Möbius strip. His prodigious technique encompassed Tynesque chordal thunderings and crisply immaculate single-note articulations that cascaded à la Bud Powell at his peak. All told, *Discovery* was a stunningly individual blend, and heralded Rubalcaba as a jazz force.

So when Blue Note's press rep called last spring and asked if I'd like to catch Rubalcaba live, I jumped at the chance and flew to Toronto, where he was slated to do two sets at El Mocambo. With Jack DeJohnette replacing Motian, the trio played with a breathtaking, heightened telepathy. Motian's a great drummer, but Latin beats aren't one of his big concerns. DeJohnette, by contrast, knows them inside out, so he locked up with Rubalcaba in ways Motian couldn't, letting him bring out the echoes of his Cuban heritage more fully. So as Haden threaded his bass lines through the subtly shifting mix, the threesome lifted the club toward rapture with their startling pivots, their sheer concentration, the varicolored musical skeins they wove seamlessly into a hypnotic tapestry.

I had to travel to Toronto to see Rubalcaba play for a simple reason: He's Cuban. Thirty-one years after the severing

of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, the Treasury Department still enforces a strict embargo against Cuba. Although the Berman amendment of 1988 expressly prohibited cultural embargoes, Treasury framed a restrictive interpretation of that law, allowing U.S. corporations only to license existing materials. So did the State Department: It routinely denies visas to Cuban artists who want to work here. The rationale was simple and unreviewable, since it was promulgated by executive fiat. It runs like this: All Cubans work for the Cuban government. Any moneys paid to a Cuban for work done in the United States are thus being paid to the Cuban government. The embargo expressly forbids that. So Rubalcaba—like all other Cuban musicians—can't tour in the United States. Unless, of course, he renounces his Cuban citizenship and emigrates, as Paquito D'Rivera and Arturo Sandoval, among others, have done.

The son of a famed musician—his father is often cited as the foremost Cuban jazz pianist of his generation—Rubalcaba exhibited talent at a very early age. So he was classically trained from age 5, and coached and cosseted in ways American artists can only envy. In Cuban terms, he belongs to a sort of elite, like doctors or engineers; he was encouraged to pursue his obvious gifts in the sturdy technical-schools system the Cubans have developed under Castro. By the early 1980s, his forays into a mix of fusion and Cuban folk music with his band Proyecto made him a star in his homeland, and even garnered him a couple of European tours.

It was 1986 when Charlie Haden, who brought his fabulous Liberation Music Orchestra to Cuba to play the Havana Jazz Festival, first heard him. Haden was blown away. For his part, Rubalcaba admired the bassist's work, especially with Ornette Coleman and Keith Jarrett. (Listening to Rubalcaba's solos, you can hear some of the same expansiveness, willingness to work themes hard and love of classical motifs that power Jarrett at his most entrancing, when he's not lapsing into self-indulgence.)

Three years later, Haden got another chance to play with Rubalcaba, at the Montreal Jazz Festival. When he came back to the United States, he urged his old friend Bruce Lundvall, who heads Blue Note, to check out the Cuban prodigy. Lundvall himself is a longtime observer of Cuban music. His first trip to Havana was in 1977, when he went down to sign Irakere—a hot Afro-Cuban jazz

band that boasted D'Rivera—for his then-home, Columbia, and has followed Cuban jazz ever since. So he took on Haden's challenge, and what he heard made him want to introduce Rubalcaba to the U.S. market. Then began machinations that lasted more than a year, while teams of lawyers struggled to find legal ways to allow a Cuban artist to release an album through a U.S. record company. In the end, the road to a Blue Note release for Rubalcaba led through Japan. Japan's Toshiba-EMI actually signed him, and that label's head, Hitoshi Namekata, became Rubalcaba's executive producer. (The pianist has become a best-selling artist there.) Lundvall's U.S. company simply licensed the albums that resulted for release in this country. That way, the U.S. embargo remained legally undisturbed, but Rubalcaba gained access to the world's single biggest market for recorded music.

For two days after their Toronto sets, the Rubalcaba trio tried to recapture their onstage magic for what became *The Blessing* (Blue Note). They succeeded. The material covers a lot of ground: Ornette Coleman's sweet-and-sour "The Blessing," Coltrane's workout "Giant Steps," Bill Evans's modal classic "Blue in Green" and the hackneyed old tune "Besame Mucho" played by every Cuban *son* group working in a Havana restaurant but here transformed into a marvelously brooding meditation. The originals, like Haden's haunting "Sandino" and Rubalcaba's own hammering, almost Cecil Tayloresque "Circuito," measure up admirably. Here even more than on his first Blue Note album, Rubalcaba's classical lyricism and fertile invention draw the listener into evocative moods. Not coincidentally, DeJohnette's drums, more active than Motian's, help frame a more equal interplay among the trio members.

With this new album echoing in my head, I set my sights on Cuba. (As a journalist, I'm one of the few Americans allowed to travel to the Forbidden Zone.) A year after the Soviet Union's collapse, it's a country in massive flux; the government is enforcing a harsh allocation of scarce goods, along with tentative steps toward a decentralized economy. The stresses are visible everywhere. On the one hand, there are the many proud structures put up for last year's Pan American games and the new tourist hotels (joint ventures between the Cuban government and Spanish or French corporations) that dot parts of Havana. On

the other, the beautiful old Spanish-built parts of the city are moldering because the huge and continuing influx of migrants from the countryside requires new housing, which eats funds that might be used for restoration. Thanks to severe gas rationing and parts shortages, the streets are remarkably free of cars; people sit for hours waiting for buses, their schedules increasingly erratic. The half-million bicycles the Cuban government says were imported last year from China (another half-million will allegedly be imported this year) take up only part of the slack. Food in the cities is tightly rationed: One meal a day is the rule, and no one over the age of 7 gets milk.

Ironically, the stars of the jazz festival were the salseros. The audience exploded into dancing.

As the Cubans try to convert their economy and bring in desperately needed hard currency—the peso is nonconvertible—they become more enamored of tourism and insist, against the odds of experience, that they'll be able somehow to control its inevitable effects. Nevertheless, theirs is fast becoming a two-tier economy, one for hard currency, the other for pesos. (The official exchange rate is one dollar for one and a quarter pesos; the black market pays thirty pesos.) Already all the decent-and-up restaurants and nightspots in Havana, not to mention the only stores that have any inventory, are effectively off-limits to most Cubans, since they demand hard currency, which Cubans are not allowed to have. (Virtually every Havanan keeps at least a few dollars in a drawer, but has to enlist a foreigner as a go-between to spend them.) Already there are small groups of children who approach any non-Cuban begging for the all-too-familiar secondary street currencies of Latin America: gum, matches, candy.

But no matter where in Havana I went—and I was free to go wherever I wanted, from tourist havens like El Bodequito, Hemingway's favorite bar, to the grimmest barrios—I felt no physical danger. Nor did I see anybody sleeping in the street or visibly hungry. Aside from its fa-

mous political graffiti, Havana's walls are unscarred. So even with garbage pickups curtailed because of shortages, Cuba's capital looks far less like a Third World city than New York.

The Havana Jazz Festival occupies two sites in the city for three days: the Teatro Nacional, an Avery Fisher Hall-type structure with a capacity of 2,200, and the Casa de la Cultura Plaza, which is outdoors and can cram about the same number into folding chairs. Beneath the Teatro is the Cafe Cantante, a small club where after-hours jams with young fusion bands blared. Audiences everywhere were varied, though there were a lot more people under 30 than you'd find at, say, New York's JVC Jazz Festival. For every guayabera-wearing middle-aged attendee there were many young Cuban MTV wannabes—not surprising, since they listen to American radio and watch American movies. Embargo or no, here as virtually everywhere else around the globe U.S. pop culture exerts an irresistible fascination.

But if the capacity-and-beyond crowds bobbed their heads to the near-heavy-metal roar of fusion groups like Cuatro Espacio and AfroCuba and Sintesis, they only got up and danced en masse when the salseros like NG La Banda or Isaac Delgado took the stage. With good reason: Cuban fusion, like its Brazilian counterpart, is a fast and furious copy of the Anglo-American template, and loses its essential Cuban components, like rhythm, in the process of machine-gunning licks over flatfooted beats and textbook-tricky chord sequences. As Lundvall observed wryly at one of the fusion shows, "Many notes, no story." Still, I heard the most unusual version of Charlie Parker's "Anthropology" I've ever encountered, complete with twenty-five-minute electric bass solo, from Cuatro Espacio. It wasn't much fun, but it did force me to think about the relationship between noodling bebop-style and noodling fusion-style.

In an almost Tolstoyan sense, all music festivals are alike. They're programmed to appeal broadly, to bring factions with diverse tastes temporarily under a larger umbrella. That means everybody will be unhappy at least some of the time. So the Havana festival disappointed some because, aside from Haden, none of the non-Cuban jazz stars Rubalcaba invited came. But to me that meant more exposure to Cuban music. If the fusion fusillades left me cold, Rubalcaba's two sets—one acoustic and one fusion—and the salsa gigs turned up the heat.

Rubalcaba opened the first night at the Teatro with a two-and-a-half-hour acoustic-jazz set that was half brilliant and half macho bullshit. Playing with Haden and eyepopping drummer Julio Barretto, formerly of Cuatro Espacio, he began most pieces with overlong Romantic solo piano introductions that, despite their technical finesse, started to wear by sheer format repetition. The middle of the set sagged, mostly because he seemed obsessed with preening; every solo had to be harder, faster, more devious than the preceding one, no matter what treatment the tune framing it demanded. His ego-centric emphasis left little room for the conversational element I most enjoy about his trio work.

But the first half resonated with interplay of the type I heard in Toronto. And the encore was a marvelous parable of jazz democracy. Barretto basically forced Rubalcaba back into dialogue via his own periodic drum outbursts, which got the audience cheering him on. So the pianist curbed his runaway chops, and the trio members began to function once again as partners rather than as star-cum-backing-section. The musical exchanges that resulted were riveting.

Somewhat ironically, the true stars of the jazz festival were the salseros. NG La Banda, for instance, did two sets. The first, at Teatro Nacional, was a hot, salified take on bebop. Geometric, Bird-like licks spewed in sharp-creased ensemble from the formidable horn section as the beats beneath roiled and a flutist shot an icy spray across the top. The second, which was outdoors, was straight salsa. Three precision-drill male singers pranced their Motown-type steps while the band jigsawed multiple rhythms. The audience exploded into dancing, although there was barely room to breathe.

The response was just as ecstatic for Isaac Delgado, whose huge band did a razor-edged, whiplash set at the Teatro Nacional. Delgado is a beautiful man who has apparently stolen the heart of nearly every woman in Cuba. He's also an extremely accomplished singer and sophisticated performer with a wide stylistic range. His big band—several horns, several percussionists, two keyboard players, three or four backup female singers, and so on—cooks with an intensity and coherence that belies the leader's white-suit, Las Vegas look. By his set's finale, everyone was moving in the aisles.

The embargo may hinder our access to Cuba's musical riches, but after only a few days in Havana it seemed clear to me

that Cubans know those riches well and are justifiably proud of them. Even musicians working tourist spots—the restaurants and hotels that take only hard currency, for instance—had an air of self-respecting professionalism, and an apparently detailed knowledge of their culture, that would be harder to find in comparable American settings. Of course, Cuban musicians are guaranteed work. The less well-known are subsidized by the better-off, via the Ministry of Culture. And all are treated as an integral part of the culture they chronicle and reflect. The contrast highlights the despicable, disorganized and embarrassing nature of U.S. arts policy.

Americans who are curious about Cuban culture and music can find ways to cut through the embargo's silence. The Center for Cuban Studies (124 W. 23rd St., New York, NY 10011) is stuffed with materials, from discs and tapes to books and magazines. David Byrne's Luaka Bop Inc. has released two terrific discs so far in its Cuban Classics series. The first, *Greatest Hits of Silvio Rodríguez: Canciones Urgentes*, introduces that Cuban music hero. An urban folk singer whose nasal voice and stance have gotten him compared to Bob Dylan, Rodríguez writes bittersweet, elliptically imagistic songs typical of the Cuban style called *Nueva Trova*, which can embrace an acoustic guitar number or a salsified up-tempo dance tune shot through with jazzy solos. The second, *Incredible Dance Hits of the '60s and '70s*, whose aptly tongue-in-cheek subtitle is *Dancing With the Enemy*, is a fine introductory survey, compiled largely by Cuban-music aficionado Ned Sublette, of key dance groups from the 1960s and 1970s. The grooves and instrumentations often reach back further than that, however. One cut is by Los Van Van, possibly the outstanding Cuban salsa band; check out their *Songo* (Mango). And New York's World Music Institute often presents Cuban music during its concert series. The collection *Sabroso* (Virgin) serves up a tantalizing assortment of Cuban hits. WMI's *Cuban and Puerto Rican Music From the African and Hispanic Tradition* (available from Music of the World, P.O. Box 3667, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, 919-932-9600) captures Orlando "Puntilla" Rios y Nueva Generacion, showcasing the rawly exhilarating sounds of *santería* invocations.

(Special thanks to David Golove, Maritza Perez, Ned Sublette, Ed Copeland and ARTEX.)

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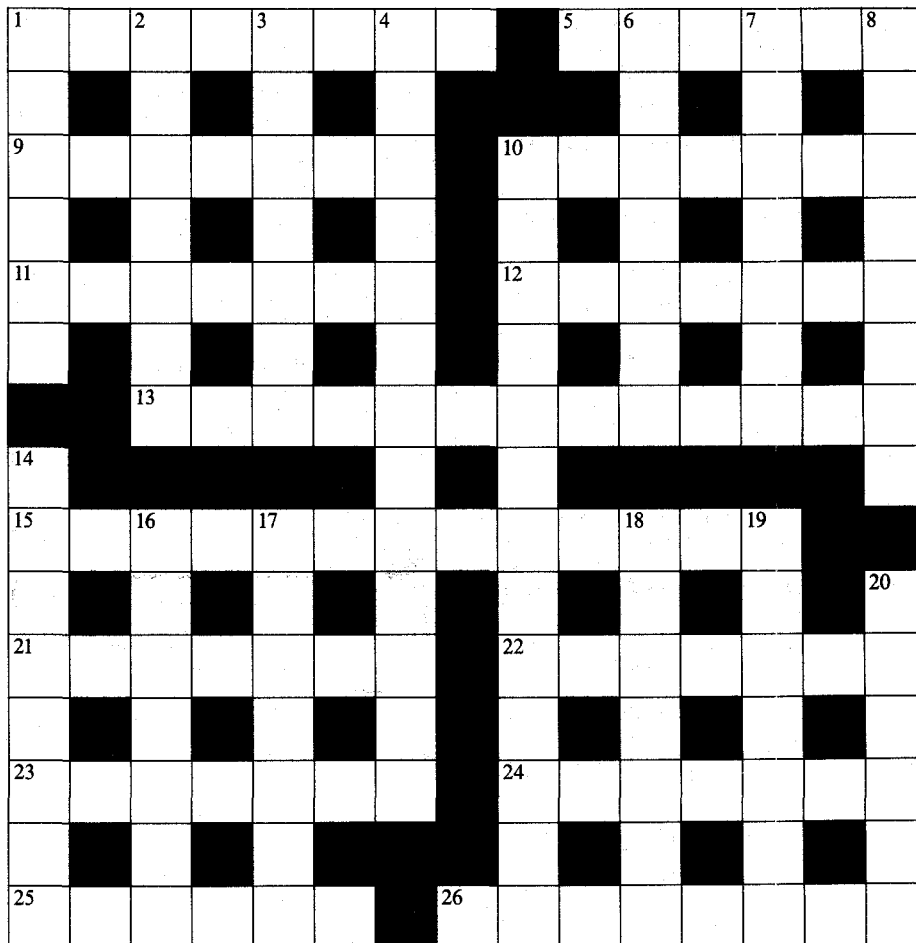
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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2384

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N	R	N	I	T	P	O	B					
E	L	I	Z	A	D	O	O	L	I	T	T	L
A	T	M	E	M	S	E	A					
R	A	I	D	E	R	S	I	N	O	R	D	E
M	C	L	Z	D	A							
E	V	I	L	S	E	L	E	M	E	N	T	A
D	S	X	R									
B	U	M	P	T	I	O	U	S	S	T	A	G
A	O	R	A	V	G							
N	U	M	E	R	I	C	P	O	M	P	E	I
D	E	O	I	E	U	R	A					
I	N	D	O	N	E	S	I	A	R	E	S	I
T	I	T	E	C	A	E	C					
A	V	O	I	D	T	H	E	I	S	S	U	E

Crossword Puzzle No. 2385

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

- 1 and 25 Simple entrance and exit for those without saving graces. (4,4,4,2)
- 5 Even leaves this way, being sixteen, or half that much. (6)
- 9 Makes a proud display of Florida relations. (7)
- 10 Part of the music "Ring" edition is shrunk back. (7)
- 11 The speed with which a lousy egg calls for salt, of a kind? (7)
- 12 When it comes to a fancy house, man is no different. (7)
- 13 His gardens were of the country type, with the air being rather pleasant. (5,8)
- 15 Some place between cardinal points is the sort as neat as you can make it. (4-5-4)
- 21 This ruling would be about to bear, if it had a more quiet beginning. (7)
- 22 A stone implement could have formed oil then. (7)
- 23 One could make a brass band alternatively something to hold fire. (7)
- 24 One may not trade properly, but rides in rather wildly. (7)
- 25 See 1 across
- 26 Do you only need to know a single pattern for such dances? (3-5)

DOWN

- 1 and 14 Pierre's bad boy, someone such as Oscar Wilde. (6,8)
- 2 Begin to be a film notoriety, and put up with it anyway! (5,2)

- 3 A neat arrangement, but the low type around it shows a partly horsy one is headed in a different way. (7)
- 4 One shouldn't be able to guess where one's laying out of dirty work will end! (7,6)
- 6 A little city on a Great Lake opposed to wine? (7)
- 7 What one might be doing with a case of gin, perhaps, after a rug gets beaten. (7)
- 8 and 20 In England particularly, such stock is common, not unusual, as the parts to plow. (8,6)
- 10 Things we don't understand might be just beyond it. (13)
- 14 See 1 down
- 16 Messages, perhaps, as one writes the name "Little Albert" inside. (7)
- 17 Engrain a sort coming up? (7)
- 18 Stirs (or a stirred beginning) with more than one purpose. (7)
- 19 Trifle with this, and turn the digits in circles. (7)
- 20 See 8

PUZZLED?

No more cross words. Find out why "little skipper" is a "truant." Send for a free copy of Frank W. Lewis's Ground Rules to *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

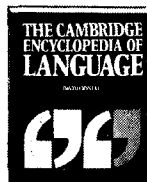


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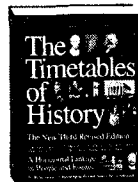
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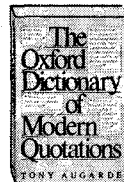
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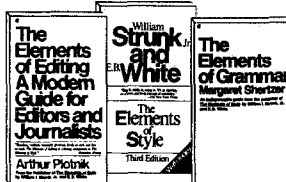
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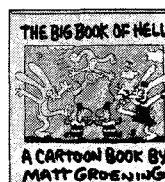
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